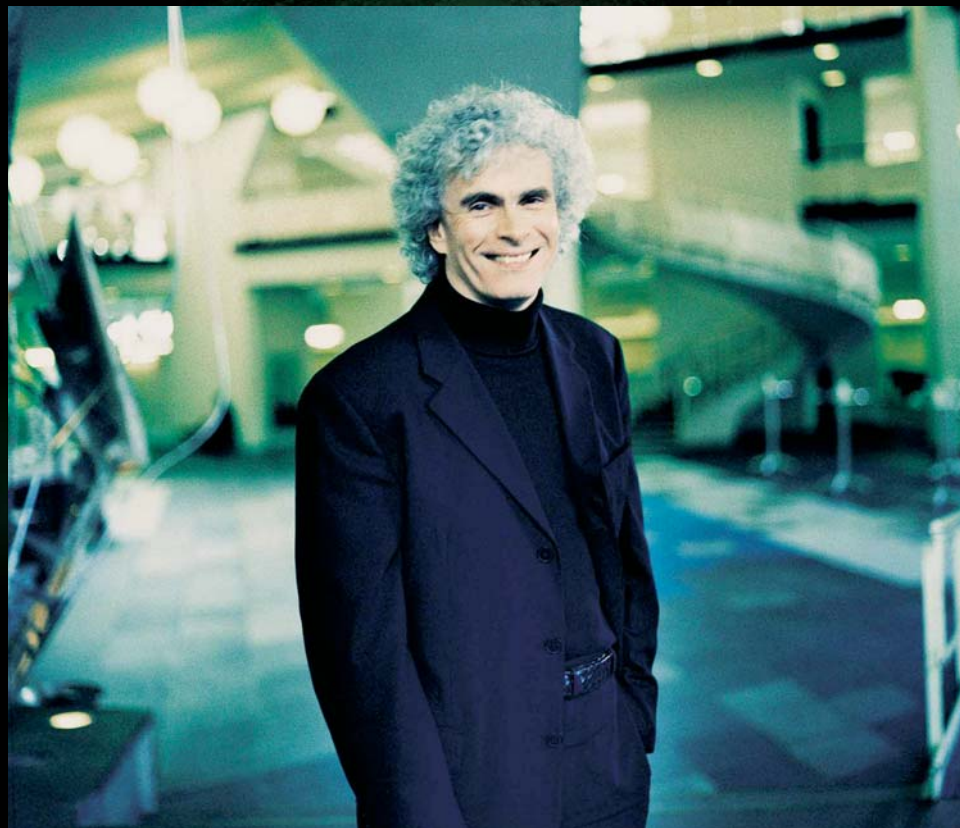




CHAN 3101(2)

JANICEK THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN



CHANDOS
OPERA IN
ENGLISH

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION



Lebrecht Collection

Leoš Janáček

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)

The Cunning Little Vixen
The Adventures of Fox Sharp-Ears

Opera in three acts
Libretto by Leoš Janáček, English translation by Yveta Synek Graff and Robert T. Jones

Forester.....	Thomas Allen
Cricket.....	Stephen Wallder
Caterpillar.....	Shelley Nash
Mosquito }	Robert Tear
Schoolmaster }	
Frog	Piers Lawrence
Vixen Cub	Rebecca Bainbridge
Forester's Wife }	Gillian Knight
Owl }	
Vixen Sharp-Ears	Lillian Watson
Dog	Karen Shelby
Pepík, the Forester's son.....	Fiona Dobie
Frantík, Pepík's friend.....	Anna Lorimer
Rooster }	Mary King
Jay }	

Chief Hen	Glenys Groves
Badger }	Gwynne Howell
Priest }	
Pásek, Innkeeper	John Dobson
Fox	Diana Montague
Woodpecker	Pat Purcell
Harašta, a poacher	Nicholas Folwell
Innkeeper's Wife	Elizabeth Bainbridge

Fox cubs: Rebecca Bainbridge, Christopher Barrett, Emily Baum, Emma Connolly,
Devin Gregory, Marc Lewis, Anna Lorimer, Adrian Lloyd, Gillian Ramsden,
Alexander Rattle, Pina Russo, Nicola Stephens, Giselle Unsworth, Stephen Wallder

Hens, Forest creatures and Voices:

Royal Opera House Chorus, Covent Garden

Robin Stapleton chorus master

Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

Simon Rattle

COMPACT DISC ONE

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[26] Interlude	1:06	[p. 80]

	Time	Page
[27] 'O my God! He's so handsome!' <i>Vixen, Fox</i>	1:39	[p. 80]
[28] 'One dark night' <i>Vixen</i>	3:15	[p. 81]
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[30] 'Can it be that I am lovely?'	3:57	[p. 82]
[31] 'Let me go! I am afraid of you!' <i>Vixen, Fox</i>	3:54	[p. 82]
[32] 'If you had only seen what I saw just now' <i>Owl, Jay, Vixen, Fox</i>	0:53	[p. 83]
[33] 'That's how it is!' <i>Fox, Vixen, Woodpecker, Forest creatures</i>	2:30	[p. 83]

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COMPACT DISC TWO

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TT 34:12

Lillian Watson as Vixen Sharp-Ears





Thomas Allen as the Forester, Gwynne Howell as the Priest and Robert Tear as the Schoolmaster

A Smile Like a Gold Medal

How I'm looking forward to the work! In the summer in Luhačovice I thought over the matter, I carry it about with me, I'm working on it. Well, it will certainly take two years... 'Will it be an opera in the ordinary sense?' I ask. – People will act in it as well as speak, but like animals. Foxes, old and young, frogs, mosquitoes – but you know it from the book. It will be an opera as well as a pantomime. 'What,' I say, 'like Rostand's *Chanteclaire*?' – The human-animals in *Chanteclaire* just philosophize. In my *Vixen* there will be dramatic action, stage action. And then the animals! For years I have listened to them, memorizing their speech; I'm at home with them.

(from 'Leoš Janáček's new work',
Lidové noviny, 15 May 1921)

The news had travelled fast round Brno, Janáček's home town, about the subject of his next opera – Rudolf Těsnohlídek's *Liška Bystrouška* ('The Vixen Sharp-Ears'). It was an extraordinary choice. The novel had originally been written as a text to accompany a series of drawings by the painter Stanislav Lolek. It describes the life of a vixen caught as a cub and reared at home by a forester. The vixen

then escapes, finds a mate, and raises a family herself. The novel, published serially in the Brno daily newspaper *Lidové noviny* in the spring of 1920, is an affectionate and observant evocation of life in the woods around Brno (much of the dialogue is conducted in its earthy dialect). Human life is centred on the forester Bartoš, and his two drinking companions, the parson and the schoolmaster. A whole range of animal life is also depicted, from the forester's dog and farmyard hens, the vixen and her family, to the animals, birds and insects of the forest. The animals speak to one another but not, however, to the humans.

Quite what prompted Janáček to compose the piece is unclear. In a well-known passage in her memoirs, the Janáčeks' long-serving maid, Marie Stejskalová, claimed that Janáček had come across her chuckling over the latest instalment in the paper, and she had there and then declared it would make a wonderful subject for an opera, especially for Janáček, with his interest in notating animal sounds. She spoils her claim by then suggesting that only then did Janáček begin reading and collecting

the instalments as they came out: were that so he would have acquired only six more instalments, since the episode she describes comes very late in the novel. Somehow, however, Janáček obtained an almost complete collection of the newspaper cuttings. Though these cuttings contain pencil markings by Janáček, it is clear that he worked mostly from the novel in book form when it came out the next year (1921). His copy of the novel is full of interesting annotations in which he began shaping his libretto, the order of events and dialogue, its emphases on seasons and cyclic movement, and the vocal pairings of some of its characters. By then Janáček was writing all his own librettos. Těsnohlídek wrote just one song for him (the Forester's song in the Act II inn scene); the remaining songs, all in Act III, came from well-known folk texts (the tunes, as usual, were Janáček's). Janáček's libretto stuck fairly closely for the first two acts to Těsnohlídek's novel. The shape of Act III is Janáček's alone, cobbled together ingeniously from various episodes in the novel.

When word got round of Janáček's strange new opera *Lidové noviny* sent its reporter Adolf Veselý to interview the composer. As the extract quoted above shows, Janáček was surprisingly forthcoming about the work, and although he

had written none of the music, he had clear ideas of the opera's general shape and nature. Particularly interesting is his emphasis on 'pantomime' (i.e. mime). This idea is present also in his annotations in the novel in which he calls for 'ballet': Janáček's evocation of the animal world was ultimately achieved through a daring mixture of dance/mime and voices, notably children's voices for some of the smaller animals and insects. Two weeks later, as a further trailer for the opera, Janáček published in *Lidové noviny* one of his occasional 'feuilletons', the first of several in which he notated birdsong. The piece ends thus: 'Why all these words about the rugged notes of the goldfinch [...]?' In the first place I liked him (or her). And second, I'm collecting suitable companions for *Liška Bystrouška*' (*Lidové noviny*, 1 June 1921).

However, Janáček was still busy with the final corrections to *Kát'a Kabanová* which had its premiere in Brno on 12 November 1921. And work on *Kát'a Kabanová* continued even after this date in response to suggestions made by Max Brod as he translated the text into German. It was only later, towards the end of the year, that he mentioned his new opera again in a sudden postscript attached to an undated letter to Brod: 'Wish me luck with *Liška Bystrouška* as well!'. The actual writing

began in the new year 1922. By August 1922 he had made a first draft of the first two acts and, after a break in the summer, he added the final act by November 1922, when the Brno theatre made an early bid for performance rights. As usual with Janáček this version was only a very rough preliminary draft and over the next year he completely rewrote it, finishing his work by 10 October 1923. The first performance took place in Brno just over a year later, on 6 November 1924.

Janáček was especially delighted with the Brno production, as Marie Stejskalová reported in her memoirs:

The master took great pleasure from the Brno premiere of *The Vixen*. He would come back from rehearsals laughing at how the singers were learning to crawl on all fours. The opera chief [František] Neumann, the producer [Ota] Zitek, and the painter [Eduard] Milén, who designed the sets, made such a beautiful work out of *The Vixen*, that it surprised even the master.

* * *

I have begun writing *Liška Bystrouška*. A merry thing with a sad end: and I am taking up a place at that sad end myself. And so I fit in there!

(Janáček to Kamila Stösslová,
10 February 1922)

There is no doubt that in many ways the opera that Janáček wrote is a 'merry thing'. It is by far his sunniest stage work and its inbuilt anthropomorphic joke of animals behaving like humans leads to many moments of pure comedy. At first sight the 'sad end' might be taken to be the death of the Vixen, which Janáček surprisingly tacked on to the original novel when he made his libretto. However, the Vixen's death comes in the opera's second to last, not its final scene and is notable for its musical restraint: the noise of gunshot and then silence. Thus Janáček avoids any possible scene of sorrowing fox and cubs; the musical evocation of pathetic or even tragic emotions which might be expected does not happen. Instead we must look elsewhere for the opera's 'sad end'.

The clue lies in Janáček's suggestive self-identification with the ending of his opera ('And so I fit in there'), and with the sadness of ageing and old age – he was approaching seventy when he completed *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Describing the final scene to Max Brod (11 March 1923), Janáček wrote: 'The Forester and the Schoolmaster grow old; the Parson has moved away. – It is spring in the forest – but also old age.' Here, and also in the

opera itself, Janáček focuses on three aspects, old age, change, and cyclical renewal, each evoking a sense of time's passing. The opera's penultimate scene makes us aware of several changes in both the human and animal worlds: the inn where the Forester and his companions meet is being redecorated; Terynka, the girl they talk and fantasise about, gets married that very day; the Parson has moved away to another village; the foxes have deserted their burrow; and the Forester notices himself and his dog becoming stiff with age. The climax of the opera is reached in the long *scena* for the Forester. Like the Schoolmaster and Parson before him in the previous act, the Forester looks back on his life, especially to his youth and happy honeymoon. He remembers his married life's beginnings which, significantly, coincide with the forest's renewal in spring – 'when May arrives and love!'. But here time is pictured not as linear but as cyclical, not as a source of sadness but of 'a more than earthly joy'.

That emphasis on the cyclical nature of life is movingly achieved in the opera's final moments by a dream sequence which returns to the location and animals of the opening scene – the beginning of the tale in which the

Forester caught the Vixen. This ending at the beginning, with a vision of 'The young Sharp-Ears is the spitting image of her mother' (Janáček's title for the scene), enables us to place the Vixen's death within a perspective which encompasses perennial renewal. Awareness of living in and through time results in a viewpoint whereby the Vixen's death and life is not seen as tragically finite but as a contribution to a larger, infinitely continuing life cycle.

It seems that in this opera Janáček made his peace with himself and with a life that had been neither easy, happy, nor, until recently, very successful. His third opera *Jenůfa* (1894–1903), given in his fiftieth year, had had to wait another twelve years for recognition beyond the tiny provincial centre of Brno. He had to write two more operas, both much-revised experimental works, before arriving at full maturity. By then he was well over sixty. *Fate* (1903–1907) was never performed in his lifetime, *The Excursions of Mr. Brouček* (1908–17) was performed in 1920 in Prague (his only premiere there), but given a cool reception. Janáček's personal life had been no easier with a marriage that had gone wrong from the start, and which had ceased to have any meaning after the early

deaths of both his children. He had taken refuge in a series of affairs, most seriously with the singer Gabriela Horvátová (the first Prague Kostelníčka in *Jenůfa*), eventually driving his wife to an unsuccessful suicide attempt. His sixth opera, *Kát'a Kabanová* (1919–1921), was his gloomiest and most tragic; the heroine, closely identified in his letters with his latest amour, Kamila Stösslová, dies amidst melodramatic rattlings of a 'fate theme'. But by then the corner had been turned. With *Kát'a Kabanová* Janáček had begun the miraculous sequence of four late operas on which, together with *Jenůfa* and the non-operatic works from his final decade, his reputation now rests. With an energetic Austrian publisher, Universal Edition, which eagerly promoted *Jenůfa* throughout the German-speaking world and further, he was rapidly becoming well known and even rich. In composition he had at last found a certainty of touch which enabled him to pour out idiosyncratic masterpieces until his death at the age of seventy-four. In his personal life, his friendship with Kamila Stösslová (initiated in 1917) was as yet a decorous amusement, conducted mostly in letters, and had not become the passionate obsession that was to overwhelm his final years. He had even

reached an accommodation with his long-suffering wife.

The Cunning Little Vixen seems then to be an expression of Janáček's hard-won, long-withheld satisfaction with life, a work written on a plateau of personal contentment and artistic fulfilment. In it he was at last able to contemplate his years and his approaching death within a philosophical framework in which life made some sense. The light-hearted novel, with its cartoon-strip origins (Janáček actually describes it in a letter as a 'girl's novel') offered a starting point, though the work he created from it was much deeper and wiser and very personal: the Forester's great *scena* at the end of the opera was played, according to Janáček's suggestions, at his funeral. In many ways regarded now as Janáček's most accessible opera, *The Vixen* is not a complacent work. The dramatic modes with which he experiments – the unique blend of dance and song, the strange mixing of animal and human worlds, the cinematic succession of tiny scenes – were advanced for their time, and the opera had to wait many decades to win over audiences and critics. The two operas that followed, *The Makropulos Affair* and *From the House of the Dead*, were much darker

works and may be cited as evidence that by then Janáček had lost that peace of mind which had been with him during the planning and writing of *The Vixen*. Těsnohlídek, summoned by Janáček to discuss the project with him soon after he began work, put his finger on it:

Leoš Janáček was waiting in the little garden of the Conservatory. He sat among the bushes, with thousands of tiny little blossoms above his head; that head of his was just as white, and seemed to be the largest of the flowers. He smiled; and I knew at once that this was the smile which life awards us like a gold medal for bravery in the face of the enemy. For bravery in sorrow, humiliation and anger. At that moment I believed that Liška Bystrouška was sitting, tamed and quite overcome by the kindness of the man in the tiny garden, and that unseen she would draw near to sit at our feet and listen to our conspiracy. Janáček made a few remarks about the story and then began talking about his forests there in Valašsko, which I don't know, about his studies of bird noises and I became aware that he had managed to know the happiness of being able to smile.

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Synopsis

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

*'How Sharp-Ears was caught'**

[1] Prelude: the forest, a sunny summer afternoon. The Badger's head emerges from his set, smoking a long pipe; flies circle around in a ballet; the Blue Dragonfly dances.

[2] All hide when a Forester approaches. Complaining of weariness ('Going to be a storm soon'), he lies down to rest. As he dozes off, a Cricket and a Grasshopper appear with a tiny barrel-organ.

[3] They strike up ('Come on, old lady, and let's get the show started'), and are joined by a Mosquito and a Frog.

[4] A young Vixen runs in. She stares at the Frog ('Mummy! Mummy! What is that?'), who takes a terrified leap and lands on the Forester's nose. Awakened, the Forester spies the Vixen, grabs her and walks off with her tucked underneath his arm.

*Janáček did not number the scenes but gave titles to those in which Vixen Sharp-Ears appears. In this booklet these titles are printed in quotation marks and underlined.

[5] The Blue Dragonfly returns, looks in vain for the Vixen, settles down and folds its wings.

'Sharp-Ears at the Forester's lakeside farmyard'

[6] Interlude: the courtyard of the Forester's lodge, autumn. The Forester's dog, Lapák, and the Vixen are lying side by side.

[7] The Forester comments on the Vixen's size ('Look at how big she's grown!'); his wife puts down a saucer of milk. Lapák confides to the Vixen that he's never known love.

[8] She sympathises ('I'm just the same too').

[9] The Forester's son proudly shows off his unusual pet to a friend ('Look what we've got down 'ere'); cruelly teased by the boys, the Vixen attacks them; the Forester puts her on a leash.

[10] Interlude: night falls, the sleeping Vixen is transformed into a young girl; she cries out in her sleep ('Ou, ou!').

[11] Dawn breaks, the Vixen is herself once more.

'Sharp-Ears as politician'; 'Sharp-Ears runs away'

[12] Lapák gives her some advice about staying out of trouble ('You should take a lesson from me!'). Coming for their feed, the Hens and the Cock deride the Vixen for not laying eggs.

[13] She berates the Hens for their slavish mentality ('Sisters! Comrades!'). Finding them stupidly unresponsive, she retires to the rubbish heap and pretends to bury herself alive.

[14] Urged on by the Chief Hen ('Come on then, don't be frightened'), the Hens approach inquisitively; the Vixen wrings their necks. For this, the Forester beats her; she bites through her leash and escapes.

Act II

'Sharp-Ears expropriates a home'

[15] Prelude: the forest near the Badger's set, late afternoon.

[16] The Vixen peers into the burrow ('Ah!'), disturbing the Badger ('Who's that out there screaming?'). Supported by the Forest Creatures, she provokes a quarrel and evicts him.

[17] Interlude: the scene changes to the snug at Pásek's tavern.

[18] The Priest tells the Forester and the Schoolmaster about a change in his circumstances ('In my new parish things have got to be better!').

[19] The Forester reminisces ('Once long since, long ago'), musing tipsily on the inevitability of change and decay. When the

Schoolmaster asks after the Vixen, he admits, crossly, that she has escaped.

[20] As he prepares to leave ('Home now?'), the Innkeeper angers him by asking him to be 'remembered' when they deal with the Vixen.

[21] Interlude: the scene changes to a moonlit pathway through the forest.

[22] Along it the Schoolmaster staggers homewards ('Something is wrong with my equilibrium'). He eventually falls over near a sunflower which the Vixen, hiding behind it, mischievously shakes.

[23] He stares in amazement ('Staccato! Flageoletti!') until, drunkenly convinced that the flower is Theresa (Terynka), the girl he is in love with, he somersaults over the fence in a gust of passion.

[24] The Priest comes bumbling along muttering quotations from the classics ('So remember to be a good man!') and recalling his youth.

[25] Eventually he places the quotation: ('Memnestho aner agathos einai') Xenophon's Anabasis. The Forester is heard shooting at the Vixen in the woods.

'Sharp-Ears's courtship'; 'Sharp-Ears's love and marriage'

[26] Interlude: the scene changes to the Vixen's

burrow on a warm, moonlit summer night; she is lying with her muzzle on her paws listening to the voices of the Forest.

[27] A dogfox emerges. The Vixen is immediately attracted ('O my god! He's so handsome!'). Shy at first, she is soon telling him the story of her life, and impresses him with her independence and owner-occupier status.

[28] She then recounts her escape from the Forester ('One dark night').

[29] The dogfox introduces himself ('Fox Goldenstripe'); the Vixen tells him her name is Sharp-Ears. The courtship progresses. Learning that she enjoys rabbit, the Fox excuses himself politely.

[30] The Vixen is left to bask in the new sensation of being admired ('Can it be that I am lovely?') until the Fox returns with a meal of rabbit. He declares his love and the Vixen responds.

[31] Although his ardour frightens her momentarily ('Let me go! I am afraid of you!') they eventually disappear together into the burrow. The Blue Dragonfly dances a ballet.

[32] The birds gossip like fishwives ('If you had only seen what I saw just now'). When the pair re-emerge at sunrise, the Vixen is sobbing. She whispers into the Fox's ears.

³³ He understands at once ('That's how it is!') and a wedding, performed by the Woodpecker, is hastily arranged. The Forest Creatures celebrate with a ballet.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act III

'Sharp-Ears outwits Harašta from Lišen'; 'Sharp-Ears's death'

¹ Prelude: Autumn. A clearing in the forest.

² Harašta, a poacher, comes warbling along the path ('In the month of May').

³ He sees a dead rabbit and is about to pick it up when the Forester hails him ('Hey there, Harašta, how's it going?'). Foiled, Harašta announces that he is about to marry Theresa (Terynka) and will never poach again.

⁴ As they go off, some Foxcubs appear ('Little foxes running fast'). They dance. The Vixen and the Fox inspect the dead rabbit and recognize a trap.

⁵ They discuss their brood ('How many children do we have?') and possible additions.

⁶ Harašta reappears with a basket of chickens, sees the Vixen and reaches for his gun ('Put it down fast!... Hurry, get your gun!'). Teased and tripped by Sharp-Ears, he fires at her and kills her.

⁷ Interlude: the scene changes to the garden of the inn.

⁸ The Forester tells the Schoolmaster about the deserted burrow ('Where is old man Pásek?'). A dead fox means a new muff for his wife, he says. The Schoolmaster announces that Theresa (Terynka) is getting married today and the Innkeeper's wife mentions that the bride has a new muff. The news brings tears to the Schoolmaster's eyes.

⁹ The Forester, greatly surprised ('Well I'm damned!'), consoles his friend.

'The young Sharp-Ears is the spitting image of her mother'

¹⁰ Interlude: the scene changes to the same part of the Forest as in Act I.

¹¹ The Forester is walking down the old path, recalling the early days of his marriage ('Spring is here at last').

¹² He revels in the beauty of the forest ('When evening arrives'). As before, he dozes off. He wakes to find himself surrounded by the Forest Creatures.

¹³ Bemusedly, he notices that one is missing ('Hey! But I can't see the Vixen there!'), and is delighted when a tiny foxcub scampers up: he is sure it is one of Sharp-Ears's children. He stretches out his hand to grasp it

only to find that he has picked up a Frog ('Hey there! I remember you!').

¹⁴ The Frog, knowing what has gone before, smugly informs him ('Tha-that wasn't me') that he is the grandson of the one the Forester remembers. Time, the seasons, the generations, all march on.

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Born in County Durham, **Thomas Allen** is an established star of the great opera houses of the world. At the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where in 2001 he celebrated the thirtieth

anniversary of his debut with the company, he has sung more than forty roles. In 2002 he celebrated the twentieth anniversary of his debut at the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

He has been particularly acclaimed for his interpretations of Billy Budd, Pelléas, Eugene Onegin, Count Almaviva, Beckmesser and Don Giovanni. Equally renowned on the

concert platform, he appears in recital in the United Kingdom, throughout Europe, in Australia and America, and has made many recordings.

Thomas Allen's first book, *Foreign Parts – A Singer's Journal*, was published in 1993. His many honours and awards include Honorary Membership of the Royal Academy of Music, Prince Consort Professor of the Royal College of Music, and Hambro Visiting Professor of Opera Studies at Oxford University. In the New Year's Honours of 1989 he was created a Commander of the British Empire, and in the 1999 Queen's Birthday Honours he was made a Knight Bachelor.



Lillian Watson was born in London and studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She made her

operatic debut with Welsh National Opera as Papagena, and made her Royal Opera debut as Barbarina. She is internationally renowned for her interpretation of Blonde (*Die Entführung*

aus dem Serrail) which she has performed at Glyndebourne, Covent Garden, Hamburg and at the Salzburg Festival. Other roles include Despina (*Così fan tutte*) in Vienna, at Glyndebourne, Aix and at Covent Garden; and both Ismène and Aspasia (*Mitridate*) which she has sung in Venice, Paris and London. She has also appeared with Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, Geneva Opera, Lausanne Opera, Rome Opera, at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées, and in Israel, Toulouse and Antwerp.

Recordings include Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) with Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Sydney Jones' *The Geisha*, and Fido in Chandos's recording of Britten's *Paul Bunyan*.



Diana Montague was born in Winchester and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. Since her debut as Zerlina with Glyndebourne Touring Opera she has appeared in venues such as the

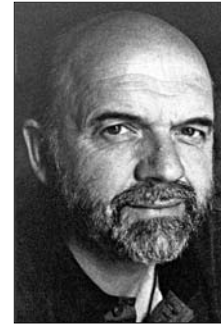
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels, the Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires and the Bayreuth and Salzburg Festivals.

Her repertory includes the major roles for mezzo-soprano in operas by Mozart, Gluck, Strauss, Rossini, Bellini and Berlioz, and her frequent concert engagements include performances under Georg Solti, James Levine, Riccardo Muti, John Eliot Gardiner, Seiji Ozawa, Jeffrey Tate and Andrew Davis.

Diana Montague's many recordings include Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, for Opera Rara *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata* and *Il crociato in Egitto*, and, for Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *Cavalleria rusticana*, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (highlights), *Faust*, and two discs of Great Operatic Arias.

Robert Tear was born and educated in Wales, and became a choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge. He is a regular guest at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, having appeared there every season since his debut in 1970. In 1988/89 he made his debut with English National Opera in *The Turn of the*

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The Marriage of Figaro (Welsh National Opera and Opéra national de Paris-Bastille), *Billy Budd* (Los Angeles Opera), and Jonathan Dove's *The Palace in the Sky* for English National Opera's Bayliss Programme. Recordings include Britten's *War Requiem*, Mahler's *Das klagende Lied*, *Die Winterreise*, and, for Chandos, *Albert Herring*, Dyson's *The Canterbury Pilgrims* and Tippett's *King Priam*.

As conductor he has worked with the London Mozart Players, Northern Sinfonia, English Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Toulouse Chamber Orchestra and Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Robert Tear is an Honorary Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and in 1984 was awarded the CBE.

Screw and the following season included his debut as Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* with Glyndebourne Touring Opera. Other appearances include *Gawain* and *Tales of Hoffmann* (Royal Opera House),



Gwynne Howell was born near Swansea and obtained degrees from the University College of Wales and Manchester University before pursuing his vocal studies at the Royal Northern College of Music. In 1968 he joined Sadler's Wells

Opera. Since moving to The Royal Opera in 1972 he has sung most of the major bass roles with the company, in productions including *Aida*, *Rigoletto*, *Otello*, *La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Don Giovanni*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Parsifal*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Palestrina* and *Stiffelio*. He has also performed regularly for English National Opera, and at Welsh National Opera, Opera North and Glyndebourne. His extensive international career has taken him to the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Chicago Lyric Opera, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Toronto, Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, Paris, Geneva and Bruxelles.

Gwynne Howell's many recordings include Mahler's Symphony No. 8, *Un ballo in*

maschera, Luisa Miller, Tristan and Isolde, Messiah and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.



Simon Rattle was born in Liverpool in 1955 and studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London. In 1974 he won first

prize in the John Player International Conducting Competition and became Assistant Conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony and Sinfonietta. He subsequently held a number of guest titles including Principal Guest Conductor of the Rotterdam Philharmonic.

In 1980 he became Principal Conductor and Artistic Adviser of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, then Music Director from September 1990 until August 1998. Since October 1992, he has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and is

also Artistic Adviser of the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. He was appointed Chief Conductor and Artistic Director of the Berliner Philharmoniker, following in the steps of Herbert von Karajan and Daniel Barenboim, and took up the post in September 2002.

He was Principal Guest Conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra from 1981 until 1994, and appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra and Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto and Boston Symphony Orchestras. He made his New York debut in 1985 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and next appeared there with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in 1988. Opera appearances include *Parsifal* and Nicholas Maw's *Sophie's Choice* for The Royal Opera, *Wozzeck* with Los Angeles Opera, *Parsifal* and *Tristan and Isolde* with the Netherlands Opera, *Katya Kabanova* with English National Opera, and *Idomeneo* and Mozart's Da Ponte operas at Glyndebourne.

Simon Rattle has made over sixty recordings, and has gained many prestigious international awards. His Channel 4 television series *Leaving Home* received the 1997 BAFTA award for 'Best Arts Programme or Series' and a number of his recent Berlin programmes

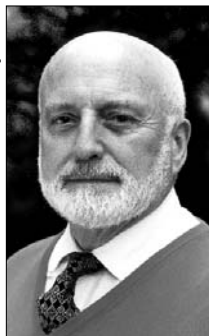
have been televised. Simon Rattle has received a number of awards in recognition of his outstanding contribution to music and his involvement in educational and community

activities. In the 1987 New Year Honours, he was awarded the CBE for his services to Music and in 1994 he was made a Knight Bachelor in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.



Diana Montague as Fox and Lillian Watson as Vixen Sharp-Ears

Bill Cooper/PMF



SIR PETER MOORES, CBE, DL

Sir Peter Moores was born in Lancashire and educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford, where he studied Italian and German. He had a 'gap year' at Glyndebourne working as a behind-the-scenes administrator before going to Oxford, then studied for three years at the Vienna Academy of Music, where he produced the Austrian premiere of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* and was a production assistant with the Vienna State Opera working as assistant producer of performances by Viennese artists at the San Carlo Opera House, Naples, at the Geneva Festival and at the Rome Opera.

In 1957 he joined his father's business, Littlewoods, becoming Vice-Chairman in 1976, Chairman from 1977 to 1980 and remaining a director until 1993. His public appointments include from 1981 to 1983 Governor of the BBC, Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1978 to 1985 and from 1988 to 1992 a Director of Scottish Opera. He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In 1992 he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant (DL) of Lancashire by HM Queen Elizabeth II. He was appointed a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in 1991 and received a Knighthood in the New Year's Honours List for 2003 in recognition of his charitable services to the arts.

PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

Peter Moores' philanthropic work began with his passion for opera: in his twenties he identified and helped a number of young artists in the crucial, early stages of their careers, several of whom – Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Colin Davis and the late Sir Geraint Evans amongst them – became world-famous. He set up his eponymous Foundation in 1964 when he was thirty-two, in order to develop his charitable aims, not only in music and the visual arts, but also in education, health,

youth, social and environmental projects. To date, because of his initiatives and life-long commitment to these causes, he has disbursed more than £85 million of his own money through the Foundation and the Peter Moores Charitable Trust – 'to get things done and to open doors'.

Projects to help the young have ranged from a scheme to encourage young Afro-Caribbeans to stay on at school to the endowment of a Faculty Directorship and Chair of Management Studies at Oxford University (providing the lead donation in 1991 for the new School of Management Studies). In 1994 a permanent Transatlantic Slave Trade Gallery, initiated by Peter Moores, opened at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, with the aim of fostering discussion about the heritage and true history of the slave trade. Substantial help was given to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Development Trust, whilst through annual PMF Scholarships established in 1971 well over two hundred young singers have received practical support at the outset of their careers, enabling a significant number to become international opera stars.

In 1993 the Foundation acquired Compton Verney, an eighteenth-century mansion, and established the Compton Verney House Trust, an independent charity which it funded in order to transform the mansion into an art gallery designed especially to encourage newcomers to the visual arts. Alongside major international touring exhibitions, it will house permanent collections of North European art, Neapolitan paintings and one of the finest collections of archaic oriental bronzes in the UK, as well as a British Portrait Collection and a British Folk Art Collection. The gallery is scheduled to open in Spring 2004.

Opera has given the Foundation its most public 'face'. Since Peter Moores initiated the live recording of the 'Goodall Ring' at the London Coliseum in the 1970s, the Foundation has enabled some eighty recordings to be produced: Chandos Records' Opera in English series – 'Opera that speaks your language' – is now the largest recorded collection of operas sung in English whilst Opera Rara's recordings of rare *bel canto* operas have opened up an immensely rich repertory previously only accessible to scholars. In live performance, the Foundation has encouraged the creation of new work and schemes to attract new audiences, financing the publication of scores and enabling rarely heard works to be staged by British opera companies and festivals.

Ein lächeln wie eine Goldmedaille

Wie ich dem Werk entgegen sehe! Im Sommer in Luhačovice habe ich darüber nachgedacht, ich gehe damit umher, ich arbeite daran. Nun, es wird sicherlich zwei Jahre dauern ... "Wird es eine Oper im herkömmlichen Sinne sein?", frage ich. – Es werden Menschen darin schauspielern und auch sprechen, aber so wie Tiere. Füchse, alt und jung, Frösche, Mücken – aber Sie kennen ja das Buch. Es wird eine Oper sein und eine Pantomime. "Was", sage ich, "so wie Rostands *Chanteclair*?" – Die Menschtiere in *Chanteclair* philosophieren nur. In meinem *Füchslin* wird es dramatische Handlung, Bühnenhandlung, geben. Und dann die Tiere! Seit Jahren habe ich ihnen gelauscht, mir ihre Sprache eingeprägt; ich fühle mich wohl mit ihnen.

(aus "Leos Janáček's neues Werk",
Lidové noviny, 15. Mai 1921)

Die Nachricht vom Thema seiner nächsten Oper hatte sich in Brünn, der Heimatstadt Janáčeks, wie ein Lauffeuer verbreitet: *Liška Bystrouška* ("Das Füchslin Schlaukopf"). Es war eine bemerkenswerte Wahl. Die Handlung hatte ihre Ursprünge in einer Reihe von Federzeichnungen des Malers Stanislav Lolek,

die mit verbindenden Texten Rudolf Těsnohlídeks im Frühling 1920 von der örtlichen Tageszeitung *Lidové noviny* als Fortsetzungsgeschichte abgedruckt worden war. Die Erlebnisse des Füchslins, das in jungen Jahren dem Förster in die Hände fällt, als Haustier aufwächst, aber schließlich entkommt und eine eigene Familie gründet, sind eine liebenswerte und gut beobachtete Naturschilderung aus den Wäldern um Brünn (koloriert durch den Dialog im derben Dialekt). Das menschliche Leben dreht sich um den Förster Bartos und seine beiden Zechkumpane, den Pfarrer und den Schulmeister. Auch das Tierleben ist reich bebildert, vom Försterhund und dem Geflügel über das Füchslin und seine Familie bis zu den Tieren, Vögeln und Insekten des Waldes. Die Tiere kommunizieren miteinander, jedoch nicht mit den Menschen.

Was nun Janáček dazu bewog, diesen Stoff zu vertonen, bleibt unklar. Seine langjährige Hausangestellte, Marie Stejskalová, wird häufig mit der Erinnerung zitiert, wie Janáček hinzugekommen sei, als sie amüsiert in die Zeitungslektüre vertieft gewesen sei; sogleich

habe sie ihm den Stoff als Opernidee vorgeschlagen, zumal er doch immer die Laute von Tieren aufschreibe. Von dem Moment an habe Janáček die wenigen noch ausstehenden Fortsetzungen gelesen und gesammelt. Irgendwie gelangte Janáček jedoch in den Besitz einer fast vollständigen Sammlung der Zeitungsausschnitte, die von ihm mit Bleistift markiert wurden. Als die Novelle dann im Jahr darauf (1921) separat veröffentlicht wurde, konnte er die eigentliche Arbeit beginnen. Sein Exemplar enthält zahlreiche faszinierende Anmerkungen, die Aufschluss darüber geben, wie er dem Libretto erste Gestalt gab, das Geschehen und den Dialog, die jahreszeitlichen Akzente und die zyklische Form sowie die Vokalkombinationen der Protagonisten herausbildete. Janáček verfasste nun schon alle seine Librettos selbst. Těsnohlídek schrieb nur ein Lied für ihn (das Lied des Försters in der Wirtshausszene im 2. Akt); die restlichen Lieder, alle im 3. Akt, beruhen auf den Texten bekannter Volksweisen, während die Melodien wie üblich von Janáček persönlich stammten. Beim 1. und 2. Akt des Librettos hielt sich der Komponist noch eng an die Vorlage Těsnohlídeks; der 3. Akt verdankt seine Form jedoch alleine Janáček, der dabei verschiedene

Episoden der Novelle genial miteinander verknüpfte.

Als sich die Kunde von der seltsamen neuen Oper Janáčeks verbreitete, schickte *Lidové noviny* seinen Reporter Adolf Veselý zu einem Interview mit dem Komponisten. Wie der eingangs zitierte Auszug beweist, war Janáček überraschend offen, und obwohl er noch keine Note zu Papier gebracht hatte, waren seine Vorstellungen von der allgemeinen Form und Art des Werkes klar in ihm herangereift. Besonders interessant ist sein Verweis auf die "Pantomime". Diese Idee tritt überall dort in der Novelle, wo seine Anmerkungen ein "Ballett" verlangen, deutlich hervor: Die Tierwelt Janáčeks verdankt ihren Charakter letztlich einer gewagten Mischung von Tanz/Pantomime und Stimmen, vor allem Kinderstimmen für einige der kleineren Tiere und Insekten. Zwei Wochen später veröffentlichte Janáček als weitere Vorankündigung der Oper eines seiner gelegentlichen "Feuilletons" in *Lidové noviny*, das erste von mehreren, in denen er Vogelgesänge in Notenform brachte. Der Artikel schließt mit den Sätzen: "Warum so viele Worte über die markanten Noten des Stieglitz [...] Erstens fand ich Gefallen an ihm (oder ihr). Und zweitens bin ich dabei,

geeignete Begleiter für Liška Bystrouška zu sammeln.” (*Lidové noviny*, 1. Juni 1921).

Allerdings war Janáček noch mit den letzten Korrekturen an *Katja Kabanowa* beschäftigt, die am 12. November 1921 in Brünn zur Uraufführung kam. Selbst danach wurde er von *Katja Kabanowa* weiter in Anspruch genommen, nachdem Max Brod, der die deutsche Bearbeitung vornahm, einige Vorschläge gemacht hatte. Erst gegen Ende des Jahres kam Janáček erneut auf die neue Oper zu sprechen, in einem Nachsatz zu einem undatierten Brief an Brod: “Wünschen Sie mir auch Glück mit *Liška Bystrouška*!“. Die eigentliche Arbeit begann im neuen Jahr 1922. Im August 1922 lagen die ersten beiden Akte als Entwurf vor, und als nach einer Sommerpause im November 1922 auch der letzte Akt Gestalt angenommen hatte, bewarb sich das Theater in Brünn bereits früh um die Aufführungsrechte. Wie von Janáček gewohnt, repräsentierte diese erste Fassung das Konzept nur in groben Zügen, und im Laufe des nächsten Jahres schrieb er die Oper völlig um. Am 10. Oktober 1923 zog er den Schlussstrich, und ein weiteres Jahr später, am 6. November 1924, kam das Werk in Brünn zur Uraufführung.

Janáček war von dieser ersten Inszenierung

besonders angetan, wie Marie Stejskalová in ihren Erinnerungen festhielt:

Der Herr fand großen Gefallen an der Brünner Premiere von *Das Füchsllein*. Wenn er von den Proben heimkehrte, lachte er oft darüber, wie die Sänger lernten, auf allen Vieren zu kriechen. Der Opernchef [František] Neumann, der Regisseur [Ota] Zitek, und der Maler [Eduard] Milén, der das Bühnenbild entwarf, machten so etwas Schönes aus dem *Füchsllein*, dass es selbst den Herrn überraschte.

* * *

Ich habe mit *Liška Bystrouška* begonnen. Ein fröhliches Ding mit einem traurigen Ende: und ich nehme selbst einen Platz am traurigen Ende ein. Und so passe ich dort hinein!

(Janáček an Kamila Stösslová,
10. Februar 1922)

Niemand wird bestreiten wollen, dass Janáčeks Oper “ein fröhliches Ding” ist. Sie ist sein bei weitem sonnigstes Bühnenwerk, und die anthropomorphe Ironie, dass die Tiere sich wie Menschen verhalten, ruft viele urkomische Momente hervor. Oberflächlich betrachtet könnte man unter dem “traurigen Ende” den Tod des Füchslains verstehen, den Janáček in seinem Libretto überraschend an den Ausgang

der Novelle anfügte. Doch Füchslains Tod ereignet sich in der vorletzten, nicht in der letzten Szene und zeichnet sich durch musikalische Zurückhaltung aus: Man hört das Schießen, und dann herrscht Stille. Auf diese Weise vermeidet Janáček eine Trauerszene mit Reinecke und den Fuchskindern; die Erwartungen an eine musikalische Darstellung von Mitleid erregenden oder gar tragischen Emotionen werden nicht erfüllt. Stattdessen müssen wir das “traurige Ende” der Oper an einer anderen Stelle suchen.

Der Schlüssel liegt in Janáčeks angedeuteter Selbstidentifizierung mit dem Ende seiner Oper (“Und so passe ich dort hinein”) und mit dem traurigen Altwerden – er selbst ging auf die siebzig zu, als er *Das schlaue Füchsllein* vollendete. Über die Schlusszene schrieb Janáček an Max Brod (11. März 1923): “Der Förster und der Schulmeister werden alt; der Pfarrer ist fortgezogen. – Es ist Frühling im Wald – aber auch Lebensabend.” Hier konzentriert sich Janáček so wie in der Oper selbst auf drei Aspekte: Lebensabend, Wandel und zyklische Erneuerung, die alle den Lauf der Zeit zum Ausdruck bringen. Die vorletzte Szene der Oper führt uns Veränderungen in der Welt der Menschen und der Tiere zu

Bewusstsein: Das Wirtshaus, wo der Förster und seine Freunde einkehren, wird renoviert; Terynka, von der alle reden und träumen, heiratet an diesem Tag; der Pfarrer ist in ein anderes Dorf gezogen; die Füchse haben ihren Bau verlassen; und der Förster stellt fest, dass ihm ebenso wie seinem Dackel die Glieder schwer werden. Die Oper erreicht ihren Höhepunkt in der langen Szene für den Förster. So wie der Schulmeister und der Pfarrer im vorausgegangenen Akt, lässt der Förster sein Leben an sich vorüberziehen, besonders seine Jugendzeit und die frohen Flitterwochen. Er erinnert sich an die junge Ehe, die bezeichnenderweise mit der Erneuerung des Waldes im Frühling zusammenfiel – “wenn der Mai kommt und die Liebe!”. Doch hier fließt die Zeit nicht linear, sondern zyklisch, es ist kein Grund zur Trauer, sondern zu einer “mehr als irdischen Freude”.

Der natürliche Kreislauf des Lebens wird in den letzten Momenten der Oper auf ergreifende Weise hervorgehoben, durch einen Traum, der an den Ort und zu den Tieren der Eröffnungsszene zurückführt – zum Anfang der Geschichte, als der Förster das Füchsllein fing. Dass sich am Ende der Kreis mit der Erkenntnis “Das junge Füchsllein sieht der

Mutter täuschend ähnlich” (Janáčeks Titel für die Szene) schließt, lässt uns den Tod des Fuchsleins in einen Rahmen der immer wiederkehrenden Erneuerung rücken. Das Leben findet dann mit dem Tod nicht ein Ende, sondern es ordnet sich bei aller Begrenzung in einen größeren, unendlichen Lebenskreislauf ein.

Janáček scheint in dieser Oper mit sich und seinem Leben, das weder einfach, noch glücklich und auch bis zuletzt nicht erfolgreich gewesen war, Frieden geschlossen zu haben. Seine dritte Oper *Jenufa* (1894–1903), die in seinem fünfzigsten Lebensjahr uraufgeführt wurde, wuchs erst nach zwölf Jahren über die provinzielle Anerkennung in Brünn hinaus. Er musste zwei weitere Opern schreiben, beides intensiv überarbeitete Experimentalwerke, bevor er zur Reife fand. Inzwischen war er weit über sechzig. *Osud* (1903–1907) wurde zu seinen Lebzeiten nicht inszeniert, *Ausflüge des Herrn Brouček* (1908–17) kam 1920 in Prag zur Uraufführung (Janáčeks einzige dortige Premiere), fand jedoch kaum Widerhall. Auch das Privatleben des Komponisten stand unter einem unseligen Stern: Seine Ehe war von Anfang an belastet und verlor nach dem frühen Tod beider Kinder allen Inhalt. Er suchte Zuflucht in

einer Reihe von Affären, vor allem mit der Sängerin Gabriela Horvátová (der ersten Prager Kostelníčka in *Jenufa*), die schließlich seine Frau in einen erfolglosen Selbstmordversuch trieben. Seine sechste Oper, *Katja Kabanowa* (1919–1921), übertraf alles in ihrer finsternen Tragik; die Heldin, die in der Korrespondenz als seine geliebte Muse Kamila Stösslová identifizierbar ist, stirbt unter den melodramatischen Klängen eines “Schicksalsthemas”. Doch inzwischen hatte sein eigenes Schicksal eine Wende genommen. Mit *Katja Kabanowa* hatte Janáček die wunderbare Erfolgsreihe von vier späten Opern eingeleitet, die zusammen mit *Jenufa* und den Werken aus seinem letzten Jahrzehnt heute seinen Ruf begründen. Mit Hilfe seines dynamischen österreichischen Verlagshauses, Universal Edition, das *Jenufa* im deutschsprachigen Raum und weit darüber hinaus publizierte, fand er schnell zu Ruhm und Wohlstand. Als Komponist hatte er endlich eine Ader entdeckt, die ihm bis zu seinem Tode im Alter von 74 Jahren idiosynchratische Meisterwerke eingab. Seine Beziehung zu Kamila Stösslová (die 1917 begonnen hatte), vor allem in Briefen zum amüsanten Zeitvertreib gepflegt, hatte noch nicht den Grad von Leidenschaft erreicht, der

seine letzten Jahre bestimmen sollte. Er hatte sich sogar mit seiner langmütigen Frau arrangiert.

Somit scheint *Das schlaue Fuchslein* ein Ausdruck der hart erkämpften, lange unterdrückten Lebenszufriedenheit Janáčeks zu sein, entstanden auf einem Plateau der persönlichen Harmonie und künstlerischen Erfüllung. Hier konnte er schließlich seine Vergangenheit und seinen bevorstehenden Tod in einem philosophischen Rahmen betrachten, in dem das Leben Sinn ergab. Die heitere Novelle mit ihren karikaturistischen Ursprüngen (Janáček sprach später in einem Brief von einem “Mädchenroman”) gab ihm einen Anfang, aus dem ein sehr viel tiefgründigeres, weiseres und persönlicheres Werk entsprang: Die große Schlusszene des Försters wurde auf Janáčeks Wunsch bei seiner Beerdigung gespielt. Obwohl es in vielerlei Hinsicht heute als die zugänglichste Oper Janáčeks gilt, ist *Das schlaue Fuchslein* kein selbstgefälliges Werk. Die dramatischen Mittel, mit denen er experimentiert – die einzigartige Verschmelzung von Tanz und Lied, die seltsame Verzahnung von Tier- und Menschenwelt, die filmische Abfolge kürzester Szenen – waren ihrer Zeit weit voraus, und das Werk musste auf die Anerkennung durch

Publikum und Kritik Jahrzehnte lang warten. Die beiden folgenden Opern, *Die Sache Makropulos* und *Aus dem Totenhaus*, waren in ihrem Wesen finsterner und lassen vermuten, dass die innere Ruhe, die ihn während der Planung und Durchführung von *Das schlaue Fuchslein* beseelt hatte, inzwischen wieder abging. Těsnohlídek, von bald nach Arbeitsbeginn zur Besprechung des Projekts eingeladen, erfasste den Moment:

Leoš Janáček wartete im Wintergarten. Er saß zwischen den Sträuchern, mit Tausenden von winzigen Blüten über seinem Haupt; dieses Haupt war ebenso weiß und schien die größte der Blumen zu sein. Er lächelte; und ich wusste sofort, dass dies das Lächeln war, mit dem uns das Leben, einer goldenen Medaille ähnlich, für Tapferkeit vor dem Feinde auszeichnet. Für Tapferkeit in Trauer, Demütigung und Zorn. In diesem Moment glaubte ich, dass Liška Bystrouška, von der Güte des Mannes gezähmt und überwältigt, in dem winzigen Garten saß und unsichtbar näher rücken würde, um uns zu Füßen zu sitzen und unserer Verschwörung zu lauschen. Janáček machte ein paar Bemerkungen zu der Geschichte und begann dann, über die Wälder dort in Valašsko zu sprechen, die mir unbekannt sind, über seine Studien des Vogelgesangs, und es

wurde mir klar, dass ihm die Seligkeit gegeben war, die aus der Fähigkeit zum Lächeln erwächst.

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Handlung

COMPACT DISC ONE

1. Akt

*„Wie Schlaukopf gefangen wurde“**

[1] Vorspiel: Im Wald, an einem schwülen Sommernachmittag. Der Dachs steckt den Kopf aus seinem Bau und lässt sich eine lange Pfeife schmecken; Fliegen kreisen im Ballett; die blaue Libelle tanzt.

[2] Alle verstecken sich vor dem Förster. Matt und müde („Going to be a storm soon“) legt er sich einen Augenblick hin. Während er einschlummert, erscheinen eine Grille und eine Heuschrecke mit einem winzigen Leierkasten.

[3] Sie spielen auf („Come on, old lady, and let's get the show started“), und eine Mücke und ein Frosch gesellen sich hinzu.

[4] Ein Füchslin läuft herbei und starrt den Frosch an („Mummy! Mummy! What is that?“), der erschrocken fortspringt und auf der Nase des Försters landet. Der aus dem

Schlaf gerissene Förster erblickt das Füchslin, fasst zu und nimmt es mit nach Hause.

[5] Die Libelle kehrt zurück, sucht vergeblich nach dem Füchslin und faltet traurig die Flügel ein.

„Schlaukopf auf dem Hof der Försterei am See“

[6] Zwischenspiel: Auf dem Hof der Försterei, im Herbst. Lapák, der Dackel des Försters, und das Füchslin liegen nebeneinander.

[7] Dem Förster fällt auf, dass das Füchslin herangewachsen ist („Look at how big she's grown“); seine Frau stellt eine Schale Milch hin. Lapák gesteht dem Füchslin, dass ihn niemand liebt.

[8] Es zeigt Mitleid („I'm just the same too“).

[9] Der Förstersohn prahlt vor einem Freund mit dem ungewöhnlichen Haustier („Look what we've got down 'ere“); als sich das Füchslin gegen die Neckereien der Jungen wehrt, wird es vom Förster angebunden.

[10] Zwischenspiel: In der Nacht verwandelt sich das Füchslin in ein junges Mädchen und weint im Schlaf („Ou, ou!“).

*Janáček gab den Szenen keine Nummern, sondern betitelte nur diejenigen, in denen Füchslin Schlaukopf auftritt. In diesem Beiheft erscheinen diese Titel in Anführungszeichen und unterstrichen.

[11] Der Tag bricht an, und das Füchslin nimmt wieder seine normale Gestalt an.

„Schlaukopf als Politikerin“: „Schlaukopf entkommt“

[12] Lapák rät dem Füchslin, Ärger zu vermeiden („You should take a lesson from me!“). Der Hahn und seine Hennen machen sich darüber lustig, dass das Füchslin keine Eier legt.

[13] Das Füchslin versucht, die dem Hahn allzu gefügigen Hennen aufzuwiegeln („Sisters! Comrades!“). Doch als die Hühner sich nicht aus ihrer Dummheit reißen lassen, scharrt sich das Füchslin verdrossen in eine Grube ein.

[14] Von der Schopfhenne gedrängt („Come on then, don't be frightened“), werfen die neugierigen Hennen einen näheren Blick auf den vermeintlichen Selbstmordversuch; dafür werden sie vom Füchslin erwürgt. Der aufgebrachte Förster will das Füchslin prügeln, das jedoch den Strick durchbeißt und entkommt.

2. Akt

„Schlaukopf enteignet eine Wohnung“

[15] Vorspiel: Im Wald bei der Dachshöhle, später Nachmittag.

[16] Das Füchslin späht in den Bau („Ah!“)

und verärgert den Dachs („Who's that out there screaming?“). Mit Hilfe der Waldtiere zettelt das Füchslin einen Streit mit dem Dachs an, der das Weite sucht.

[17] Zwischenspiel. Im Wirtshaus von Pásek.

[18] Der Pfarrer erzählt dem Förster und dem Schulmeister von seinem Wunsch nach Versetzung („In my new parish things have got to get better!“).

[19] Der Förster schwelgt in Erinnerungen („Once long since, long ago“) und sinniert beschwipst über die Unabwendbarkeit des Wandels und des Niedergangs. Als der Schulmeister sich nach dem Füchslin erkundigt, gesteht der Förster brummig seinen Verlust ein.

[20] Beim Abschied („Home now?“) verärgert ihn Pásek mit der Bitte, dem Füchslin schöne Grüße zu bestellen.

[21] Zwischenspiel. Auf einem mondbeschiedenen Waldweg.

[22] Der Schulmeister taumelt heim („Something is wrong with my equilibrium“). An einer Sonnenblume, die das schelmische Füchslin aus dem Versteck vor ihm bewegt, fällt er zu Boden.

[23] Verblüfft starrt er die Blume an („Staccato! Flageoletti!“), fest überzeugt davon, dass es sich um die geliebte Theresa [Terynka]

handelt, und in einem Anfall von Leidenschaft setzt er über den Zaun.

[24] Nun kommt der Pfarrer. Er murmelt klassische Zitate vor sich hin ("So remember to ge a good man") und wird ebenfalls von Erinnerungen verfolgt.

[25] Schließlich fällt ihm die Quelle des Zitats ("Memnestho aner agathos einai") ein: Xenophons Anabasis. Den Förster hört man das Füchslin mit Schüssen verscheuchen.

"Schlaukopfs Liebesnacht"; "Schlaukopfs Glück und Vermählung"

[26] Zwischenspiel. Eine warme Mondnacht am Bau. Das Füchslin liegt entspannt und lauscht den Stimmen des Waldes.

[27] Ein Fuchs kommt vorbei. Das Füchslin ist gleich von ihm angetan ("Oh my god! He's so handsome"). Sie überwindet ihre anfängliche Schüchternheit und erzählt ihm bald ihre Lebensgeschichte. Er ist von ihrer Unabhängigkeit und ihrem Status als Hausbesitzerin beeindruckt.

[28] Nun berichtet sie, wie sie dem Förster entkam ("One dark night").

[29] Der Fuchs macht sich bekannt ("Fox Goldenstripe"); das Füchslin stellt sich als Schlaukopf vor. Die beiden kommen sich näher. Als sie ihm von ihrer Liebesspeise

erzählt, entschuldigt er sich für einen Moment.

[30] Das Füchslin freundet sich mit dem neuen Gefühl an, bewundert zu werden ("Can it be that I am lovely?"), bis der Fuchs mit einem Kaninchenbraten zurückkehrt. Er gesteht seine Liebe, und das Füchslin erwidert sie.

[31] Obwohl seine Leidenschaft sie zunächst verschreckt ("Let me go! I am afraid of you!"), verschwinden sie schließlich gemeinsam im Bau. Die blaue Libelle tanzt ein Ballett.

[32] Die Vögel tratschen wie Marktweiber ("If you had only seen what I saw just now"). Als das Paar bei Sonnenaufgang wieder erscheint, beginnt das Füchslin zu schluchzen. Sie flüstert dem Fuchs etwas ins Ohr.

[33] Er begreift sofort ("That's how it is"), und schnellstens wird die Trauung durch den Specht arrangiert. Die Waldtiere feiern das Ereignis mit einem Ballett.

COMPACT DISC TWO

3. Akt

"Schlaukopf überlistet Háraschta aus Lisen"; "Schlaukopfs Tod"

[1] Vorspiel: Herbst. Auf einer Lichtung.

[2] Der Wilderer Háraschta zieht singend durch den Wald ("In the month of May").

[3] Er erblickt ein totes Kaninchen, kann es aber nicht einstecken, weil der Förster kommt ("Hey there, Harašta, how's it going?").

Háraschta erzählt ihm von seiner bevorstehenden Hochzeit mit Theresa [Terynka] und dass er nie wieder wildern wird.

[4] Nach ihrem Abgang erscheint eine ganze Fuchsfamilie ("Little foxes running fast"). Die Kinder tanzen. Schlaukopf und Reinicke untersuchen das tote Kaninchen und erkennen die Falle.

[5] Sie unterhalten sich über den Nachwuchs ("How many children do we have?") und die Vergrößerung der Familie.

[6] Háraschta kommt mit einem Korb Hühner zurück, sieht das Füchslin und greift zum Gewehr ("Put it down fast... Hurry, get your gun!"). Von Schlaukopf provoziert und zu Fall gebracht, schießt er zornig um sich und tötet sie.

[7] Zwischenspiel. Im Garten der Schenke.

[8] Der Förster erzählt dem Schulmeister von dem verlassenen Fuchsbau ("Where is old man Pásek?"). Ein toter Fuchs bedeute einen neuen Muff für seine Frau. Der Schulmeister verkündet, dass Theresa [Terynka] heute getraut werde, und die Frau des Wirts erwähnt, die Braut besitze einen neuen Muff.

Bei dieser Nachricht kommen dem Schulmeister die Tränen.

[9] Der Förster ist verdattert ("Well I'm damned!") und tröstet seinen Freund.

"Das junge Füchslin Schlaukopf sieht der Mutter täuschend ähnlich"

[10] Zwischenspiel. Die Waldszene aus dem 1. Akt.

[11] Der Förster ist in den Wald zurückgekehrt und erinnert sich an die Anfangszeit seiner Ehe ("Spring is here at last").

[12] Er lässt die Schönheit des Waldes auf sich einwirken ("When evening arrives"). Wieder schlummert er ein. Beim Erwachen findet er sich von den Waldtieren umringt

[13] Verwundert bemerkt er, dass ein Tier fehlt ("Hey! But I can't see the vixen there!"), und freut sich über ein junges Füchslin, das sicherlich eines von Schlaukopfs Kindern sein muss. Als er die Hand danach ausstreckt, fängt er stattdessen einen Frosch ("Hey there! I remember you!").

[14] Der Frosch, wohlwissend, was geschehen ist, stellt sich als Enkel des Frosches vor, der den Förster einst unsanft weckte ("Tha-that wasn't me"). Die Natur, die Jahreszeiten, die Generationen, alle nehmen ihren Lauf.

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Thomas Allen, in County Durham geboren, hat an allen großen Opernhäusern der Welt gesungen. Alleine an der Royal Opera Covent Garden, wo er 2001 sein dreißigjähriges Jubiläum feierte, hat er mehr als vierzig Rollen verkörpert. 2002 beging er sein zwanzigjähriges Jubiläum an der Metropolitan Opera New York.

Besonders berühmt ist er für Leibrollen wie Billy Budd, Pelléas, Eugen Onegin, Graf Almaviva, Beckmesser und Don Giovanni. Als ebenso berühmter Konzertkünstler tritt er regelmäßig in ganz Europa, Australien und Amerika auf, und er hat unzählige Schallplatten aufgenommen.

Thomas Allens erstes Buch, *Foreign Parts – A Singer's Journal*, wurde 1993 veröffentlicht. Er ist Ehrenmitglied der Royal Academy of Music, Prince Consort Professor am Royal College of Music und Hambro Gastprofessor für Opernstudien an der Universität Oxford. 1989 erhielt er den britischen Verdienstorden CBE, und 1999 wurde er von Königin Elizabeth II. in den Adelsstand erhoben.

Lillian Watson wurde in London geboren und studierte an der Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Sie gab ihr Operndebüt an der Welsh National Opera als Papagena und

debütierte an der Royal Opera Covent Garden als Barbarina. International berühmt ist sie als Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) – eine Rolle, die sie in Glyndebourne, Covent Garden, Hamburg und bei den Salzburger Festspielen verkörpert hat. Außerdem hat sie Despina (*Così fan tutte*) in Wien, Glyndebourne, Aix und Covent Garden sowie Ismène und Aspasia (*Mitridate*) in Venedig, Paris und London gesungen. Weitere Verpflichtungen haben sie an die Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, an die Bühnen von Genf, Lausanne und Rom, an das Théâtre des Champs Élysées sowie nach Israel, Toulouse und Antwerpen geführt.

Ihre Schallplattenaufnahmen umfassen Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) mit Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *The Geisha* von Sydney Jones und Fido in der Chandos-Aufnahme von Britten's *Paul Bunyan*.

Diana Montague wurde in Winchester geboren und studierte am Royal Northern College of Music. Seit ihrem Debüt als Zerlina mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera ist sie an vielen namhaften Opernhäusern – Royal Opera Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera New York, Théâtre de la Monnaie Brüssel, Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, Teatro Colon

Buenos Aires – sowie bei den Bayreuther und Salzburger Festspielen aufgetreten.

Ihr Repertoire umfasst die wichtigen Rollen für Mezzosopran in Opern von Mozart, Gluck, Strauss, Rossini, Bellini und Berlioz, und im Rahmen regelmäßiger Konzertverpflichtungen ist sie unter der Leitung von Georg Solti, James Levine, Riccardo Muti, John Eliot Gardiner, Seiji Ozawa, Jeffrey Tate und Andrew Davis aufgetreten.

Diana Montague hat zahlreiche Schallplatten aufgenommen, u.a. Monteverdis *Orfeo*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, für Opera Rara *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata* und *Il crociato in Egitto* sowie für Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation *Cavalleria rusticana*, Oktavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Auszüge), *Faust* und zwei Sammlungen großer Opernarien.

Robert Tear wuchs im heimatlichen Wales auf, bevor er als Chorstipendiat vom King's College Cambridge aufgenommen wurde. Seit seinem Debüt an der Royal Opera Covent Garden 1970 ist er dort jedes Jahr aufgetreten. 1988/89 debütierte er an der English National Opera in *The Turn of the Screw*, und im Jahr

darauf sang er zum erstenmal Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* mit der Glyndebourne Touring Opera. Es folgten Gawain und *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Royal Opera House), *Le nozze di Figaro* (Welsh National Opera und Opéra national de Paris-Bastille), *Billy Budd* (Los Angeles Opera) und Jonathan Doves *The Palace in the Sky* im Rahmen des Bayliss-Programms der English National Opera. Zu seinen Schallplattenaufnahmen gehören Britten's *War Requiem*, Mahlers *Das klagende Lied* und *Die Winterreise* sowie für Chandos *Albert Herring*, Dysons *The Canterbury Pilgrims* und Tippett's *King Priam*.

Als Dirigent ist er mit den London Mozart Players, der Northern Sinfonia, dem English Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Kammerorchester Toulouse und Scottish Chamber Orchestra aufgetreten. Robert Tear ist Ehrenmitglied des King's College Cambridge und seit 1984 Träger des britischen Verdienstordens CBE.

Gwynne Howell wurde unweit von Swansea geboren und studierte am University College of Wales und an der Manchester University, bevor er sich dem Gesangsstudium am Royal Northern College of Music widmete. 1968

trat er der Sadler's Wells Opera bei, und 1972 wechselte er an die Royal Opera Covent Garden, wo er die meisten großen Bassrollen gesungen hat, von *Aida*, *Rigoletto*, *Otello*, *La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Don Giovanni*, *Eugen Onegin*, *Parsifal*, *Tristan und Isolde* und *Der fliegende Holländer* bis zu *Palestrina* und *Stiffelio*.

Außerdem ist er regelmäßig an der English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Opera North und in Glyndebourne aufgetreten. Sein internationaler Erfolg hat ihn an die Metropolitan Opera New York und die Chicago Lyric Opera, nach San Francisco, Santa Fe, Toronto, Hamburg, Köln, München, Paris, Genf und Brüssel geführt.

Unter den vielen Schallplattenaufnahmen Gwynne Howells sind die Achte von Mahler, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Luisa Miller*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Messiah* und Beethovens Neunte besonders hervorzuheben.

Simon Rattle wurde 1955 in Liverpool geboren und studierte an der Royal Academy of Music in London. 1974 gewann er den Ersten Preis des internationalen John Player Dirigentenwettbewerbs und wurde von der Bournemouth Symphony und Sinfonietta als Assistenzdirigent verpflichtet. Anschließend leitete er verschiedene Orchester als

Gastdirigent und war Hauptgastdirigent beim Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest.

1980 wurde er zum Chefdirigenten und künstlerischen Berater des City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra berufen, dessen musikalische Leitung er von September 1990 bis August 1998 wahrnahm. Seit Oktober 1992 ist er Hauptgastdirigent des Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment und künstlerischer Berater der Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. In der Nachfolge Herbert von Karajans und Daniel Barenboims wurde er zum Chefdirigenten und künstlerischen Leiter der Berliner Philharmoniker gewählt, denen er nun seit September 2002 vorsteht.

Er war von 1981 bis 1994 Hauptgastdirigent des Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra und ist mit dem Cleveland Orchestra sowie den Sinfonieorchestern von Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto und Boston aufgetreten. Sein New Yorker Debüt gab er 1985 mit der Los Angeles Philharmonic, und 1988 kehrte er mit dem City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra dorthin zurück. Zu seinen Opernverpflichtungen gehörten *Parsifal* und Nicholas Maw's *Sophie's Choice* an der Royal Opera Covent Garden, *Wozzeck* an der Los Angeles Opera, *Parsifal* und *Tristan und Isolde*

an der Nederlandse Opera, *Katja Kabanowa* an der English National Opera sowie *Idomeneo* und Mozarts Da-Ponte-Opern in Glyndebourne.

Simon Rattle hat über sechzig Schallplatten aufgenommen und ist mit zahlreichen internationalen begehrten Auszeichnungen gewürdigt worden. Seine Channel-4-Fernsehserie *Leaving Home* erhielt 1997 den BAFTA-Preis als beste Kultursendung

oder- serie des Jahres, und mehrere seiner jüngsten Berliner Programme sind vom Fernsehen ausgestrahlt worden. In Anerkennung seiner außergewöhnlichen Verdienste um die Musik und seiner pädagogischen und sozialbewussten Tätigkeit hat Simon Rattle eine Reihe von Ehrungen erhalten. 1987 wurde er mit dem britischen Verdienstorden CBE ausgezeichnet und 1994 von Königin Elizabeth II. in den Adelsstand erhoben.



Gwynne Howell as Badger, Thomas Allen as Forester and Robert Tear as Mosquito

Un sourire comme une médaille d'or

J'ai tellement hâte de voir cette œuvre prendre forme! Durant l'été à Luhačovice, j'y ai bien réfléchi, c'est un projet que j'emmène partout avec moi, j'ai commencé à y travailler. Ça me prendra certainement deux ans. "S'agira-t-il d'un opéra dans le sens courant du terme?" lui demandai-je. – Il y aura des personnes qui joueront et parleront, mais à la manière d'animaux. Des renards, jeunes et vieux, des grenouilles, des moustiques – enfin, vous connaissez le livre. Ce sera un opéra doublé d'une pantomime. "A la manière de *Chanteclair* de Rostand?" – Les hommes-animaux dans *Chanteclair* se contentent de philosopher. Dans ma *Renarde* il y aura du spectacle, de l'action sur scène. Et puis les animaux! Ça fait des années que je les écoute, que je mémorise leur langage; avec eux, je suis en terrain connu.

(extrait de "La nouvelle œuvre de Leoš Janáček",
Lidové noviny, 15 mai 1921)

La nouvelle du sujet du prochain opéra de Janáček – *Liška Bystrouška* ("La Renarde Fine-Oreille") de Rudolf Těsnohlídek – avait vite fait le tour de Brno, la ville natale du compositeur. C'était bien là un choix

extraordinaire. Le roman avait été écrit au départ pour accompagner une série de dessins du peintre Stanislav Lolek. C'est l'histoire d'une renarde qui se fait prendre encore toute jeune et qu'un garde-forestier décide d'élever chez lui. Un jour, la renarde s'échappe, rencontre un mâle et élève à son tour une famille. Le roman, publié en épisodes dans le quotidien de Brno *Lidové noviny* au printemps de 1920, est une évocation tendre et perspicace de la vie dans les forêts autour de Brno (le dialogue utilise surtout le dialecte truculent du coin). La vie humaine tourne autour de Bartoš, le garde-forestier, et ses deux compagnons de beuverie, le prêtre et l'instituteur. On y retrouve la faune la plus varié, depuis le chien du forestier et les poules de la ferme, la renarde et sa famille, jusqu'aux animaux, oiseaux et insectes de la forêt. Les animaux se parlent entre eux mais ne parlent pas aux hommes.

L'on ne sait pas exactement ce qui poussa Janáček à composer cette œuvre. Dans un passage bien connu de ses mémoires, Marie Stejskalová, la fidèle servante des Janáček, prétend que le compositeur l'avait surprise en

train de glousser à la lecture du dernier épisode en date dans le journal, et qu'elle lui avait déclaré sur-le-champ que ce serait un merveilleux sujet pour un opéra, en particulier pour Janáček, puisqu'il aimait transcrire les bruits des animaux. Mais son histoire perd de sa crédibilité lorsqu'elle ajoute que c'est seulement à cette époque que Janáček commença à lire et à collectionner les épisodes au fur et à mesure de leur sortie: si cela avait été le cas, il n'aurait acquis que six épisodes supplémentaires puisque l'épisode dont elle parle se situe vers la fin du roman. Et pourtant, on ne sait trop comment, Janáček se fit une collection presque complète de coupures de journaux. Si ces coupures renferment des notes au crayon de la main de Janáček, il est clair cependant qu'il travailla essentiellement à partir du roman sous forme de livre lorsqu'il parut l'année suivante (1921). Son exemplaire du roman abonde en annotations intéressantes dans lesquelles le livret commence à prendre forme, avec la suite des épisodes et le dialogue, l'accent mis sur les saisons et le mouvement cyclique, et la voix envisagée pour certains personnages. A l'époque Janáček écrivait ses propres livrets. Těsnohlídek n'écrivit qu'une seule chanson pour lui (la chanson du garde-forestier dans la

scène de l'auberge à l'Acte II); les autres chansons, toutes à l'Acte III, s'inspirent de célèbres textes populaires (les mélodies étant comme d'habitude de Janáček). Le livret de Janáček respecte de près le roman de Těsnohlídek dans les deux premiers actes. La forme prise par l'Acte III est entièrement due à Janáček, un patchwork ingénieux de différents épisodes situés tout au long du roman.

Lorsque le bruit courut que Janáček travaillait à un nouvel opéra plutôt étrange, le *Lidové noviny* envoya son journaliste Adolf Veselý interviewer le compositeur. Comme le montre l'extrait qui ouvre cet article, Janáček fut singulièrement ouvert à propos de son œuvre, et sans avoir encore composé une seule note, il avait pourtant déjà une idée bien nette de la nature de son opéra et de la forme qu'il prendrait. Ce qui est particulièrement intéressant, c'est l'accent mis sur la "pantomime" (c'est-à-dire le mime). Cette idée se retrouve aussi dans ses annotations du roman lorsqu'il parle de l'utilisation de "ballet": pour évoquer le monde animal, Janáček choisirait finalement un mélange audacieux de danse, de mime et de voix, notamment de voix d'enfants pour les petits animaux et les insectes. Deux semaines plus tard, ouvrant la voie pour l'opéra, Janáček

publia dans le *Lidové noviny* l'un de ses "bulletins" occasionnels, le premier de plusieurs dans lesquels il transcrivit le chant des oiseaux. L'article s'achève ainsi: "Pourquoi consacrer tant de mots au chant inégal du chardonneret [...] ? D'abord, c'est parce que cet oiseau m'a plu. Ensuite, c'est parce que je recueille tous les compagnons qui risquent de convenir à ma Petite Renarde." (*Lidové noviny*, 1er juin 1921)

Toutefois, à l'époque, Janáček était encore très occupé par les dernières corrections de *Káťa Kabanová* qui fut créé à Brno le 12 novembre 1921. Et sa tâche ne s'acheva pas avec la première puisqu'il fit d'autres corrections sur les conseils de Max Brod qui traduisait le livret en allemand. Il faut attendre la fin de l'année pour que Janáček mentionne à nouveau son nouvel opéra dans un postscriptum inattendu à la fin d'une lettre non datée adressée à Brod: "Souhaitez-moi aussi bonne chance pour ma *Petite Renarde*!" Il en commença la composition à proprement parler l'année suivante 1922. En août 1922, il avait achevé une première esquisse des deux premiers actes; après un été inactif, il ajouta le dernier acte et en novembre 1922 le théâtre de Brno fut le premier à demander le droit de monter l'œuvre. Comme toujours avec

Janáček, cette première version ne serait qu'un brouillon et durant les douze mois suivants il réécrivit entièrement son œuvre, l'achevant le 10 octobre 1923. La première eut lieu à Brno pratiquement un an plus tard, le 6 novembre 1924.

Janáček fut particulièrement enchanté par la mise en scène de Brno, comme Marie Stejskalová nous le rapporte dans ses mémoires:

Le maître prit un très grand plaisir à la création de *La Renarde* à Brno. Après les répétitions, il me racontait en riant comment les chanteurs apprenaient à marcher à quatre pattes. Le directeur de l'opéra [František] Neumann, le metteur en scène [Ota] Zitek et le peintre [Eduard] Milén, qui créa les décors, firent une *Renarde* d'une telle beauté qu'elle surprit même le maître.

* * *

J'ai commencé à écrire *La Petite Renarde*. Une histoire joyeuse avec une fin triste: et je joue moi-même un rôle dans cette fin triste. Et je ne détonne donc pas!"

(Janáček à Kamila Stösslová, 10 février 1922)

Il est indubitable que par bien des côtés l'opéra de Janáček est "une histoire joyeuse".

C'est de loin son œuvre la plus radieuse pour la scène et son traitement plein d'humour des animaux qui se comportent comme des êtres humains résulte en de nombreux passages de pure comédie. A première vue, on peut penser que la "fin triste" concerne la mort de la renarde, que Janáček décida étrangement d'ajouter au roman original lorsqu'il écrivit son livret. Toutefois, la mort de la renarde ne se situe pas dans la dernière scène mais dans l'avant-dernière scène et c'est un passage remarquable pour sa retenue musicale: un coup de feu, puis le silence. Janáček évite ainsi d'avoir à nous montrer un renard et des renardeaux affligés; l'évocation musicale d'émotions pitoyables, voire même tragiques, à laquelle on pourrait s'attendre, ne se produit pas. C'est ailleurs qu'il nous faut chercher la "fin triste" de l'opéra.

La clé se situe dans la façon suggestive dont Janáček s'identifie à la fin de l'opéra ("Et je ne détonne donc pas") et à la tristesse du vieillissement et de la vieillesse – il approchait les soixante-dix ans lorsqu'il acheva la *Petite Renarde rusée*. Décrivant la scène finale à Max Brod (11 mars 1923), Janáček écrivit: "Le garde-forestier et l'instituteur vieillissent; le prêtre est parti ailleurs. – c'est le printemps dans la forêt – mais aussi la vieillesse." Dans

cette citation, ainsi que dans l'opéra lui-même, Janáček se concentre sur trois aspects, la vieillesse, le changement et le renouveau cyclique, chacun évoquant le passage du temps. L'avant-dernière scène de l'opéra nous fait prendre conscience de plusieurs changements dans le monde animal comme dans le monde humain: l'auberge où le garde-forestier et ses amis se réunissent est en travaux; Terinka, le sujet de toutes leurs discussions et de tous leurs fantasmes, se marie ce jour même; le prêtre est parti vivre dans un autre village; les renards ont abandonné leur tanière; et le garde-forestier s'aperçoit qu'il se raidit avec l'âge, tout comme son chien. L'apogée de l'opéra se situe dans la longue scène du garde-forestier. Comme l'instituteur et le prêtre avant lui dans l'acte précédent, le garde-forestier se penche sur son passé, en particulier sur sa jeunesse et sur l'époque heureuse de sa lune de miel. Il se souvient des premiers temps de son mariage qui, fait révélateur, coïncident avec le renouveau de la forêt au printemps – "lorsque le mois de mai et l'amour arrivent!". Mais le temps n'est pas représenté comme un phénomène linéaire mais cyclique, non pas comme une source de peine mais une source de "joie plus que terrestre".

L'importance accordée à la nature cyclique de la vie ressort de façon très émouvante tout à la fin de l'opéra dans un rêve qui nous replonge dans le cadre et au milieu des animaux de la première scène – le début de l'histoire lorsque le garde-forestier attrape la renarde. Cette conclusion qui revient au début, avec une vision de la jeune Fine-Oreille qui est “le portrait craché de sa mère” (le titre donné à la scène par Janáček), nous permet d'inscrire la mort de la renarde dans la perspective du renouveau perpétuel. Conscient de vivre dans le temps et à travers le temps, Janáček perçoit la vie et la mort de la renarde non pas comme des événements tragiquement limités mais comme une contribution à un cycle de vie bien plus vaste se renouvelant à l'infini.

Dans cet opéra, Janáček semble s'être réconcilié avec lui-même et avec une vie qui n'avait été ni facile, ni heureuse, ni, jusque-là, couronnée de succès. Son troisième opéra, *Jenůfa* (1894–1903), créé l'année de ses cinquante ans, n'était devenu célèbre en dehors du minuscule centre provincial de Brno que douze ans plus tard. Janáček dut écrire deux autres opéras, deux œuvres expérimentales fréquemment révisées, avant d'atteindre sa pleine maturité. Il avait alors largement

dépassé la soixantaine. *Osud* (1903–1907) ne fut jamais donné de son vivant, *Les Voyages de Monsieur Brouček* (1908–17) fut donné en 1920 à Prague (sa seule création dans cette ville) mais reçut un accueil mitigé. La vie privée de Janáček n'avait pas été plus facile: son mariage avait dérapé dès le début et perdu tout sens après la mort prématurée de ses deux enfants. Il s'était réfugié dans une série de liaisons, la plus sérieuse d'entre elles avec la chanteuse Gabriela Horvátová (la première Kostelnička à Prague dans *Jenůfa*), des liaisons qui poussèrent sa femme à une tentative ratée de suicide. Son sixième opéra, *Káťa Kabanová* (1919–1921) est le plus tragique et le plus noir de tous ses opéras; l'héroïne, qu'il identifia de près dans ses lettres à son amour le plus récent, Kamila Stösslová, meurt au milieu des rôles mélodramatiques d'un “thème du destin”. Mais la chance avait enfin tourné. Avec *Káťa Kabanová*, Janáček entamait la série miraculeuse de ses quatre derniers opéras sur laquelle, avec *Jenůfa* et les œuvres non lyriques de ses dix dernières années, sa réputation repose aujourd'hui. Grâce à Universal Edition, une maison d'édition autrichienne fort énergique, qui promut *Jenůfa* avec empressement dans tous les pays de langue allemande, et même au-delà, Janáček

devint rapidement célèbre et même riche. Dans ses compositions, il avait enfin trouvé une assurance qui lui permit de produire des chefs d'œuvre extrêmement personnels jusqu'à sa mort à l'âge de soixante-quatorze ans. Sur le plan personnel, son amitié avec Kamila Stösslová (commencée en 1917) n'était encore qu'au stade du divertissement tout à fait honorable, mené essentiellement par le biais de lettres: il était encore loin de la passion obsessive qui l'accablerait dans ses dernières années. Il avait même atteint un compromis avec sa femme si patiente.

La Petite Renarde rusée semble donc exprimer le contentement de Janáček face à la vie, un bonheur qu'il avait longtemps attendu et qu'il méritait pleinement; c'est une œuvre composée à l'apogée de la félicité personnelle et du contentement artistique. Dans cette œuvre, il réussit enfin à faire face aux années et à la mort prochaine avec philosophie, en donnant un sens à la vie. Le roman léger, inspiré de la bande dessinée (Janáček le qualifie dans une lettre de “roman de fille”) lui servit de point de départ, mais l'œuvre qu'il créa était bien plus profonde, plus judicieuse et plus personnelle: la grande scène du garde-forestier à la fin de l'opéra fut jouée, selon les dernières volontés du compositeur, à son

enterrement. Jugé à bien des égards comme l'opéra le plus accessible de Janáček, *La Petite Renarde* ne se satisfait pas pour autant de peu. Les modes dramatiques avec lesquels le compositeur expérimente – cette fusion unique de danse et de chant, l'étrange mélange du monde animal et du monde humain, la succession filmique de courtes scènes – étaient en avance pour leur époque et l'opéra dut attendre plusieurs dizaines d'années avant de convaincre publics et critiques. Les deux opéras qui suivirent, *L'Affaire Makropoulos* et *De La Maison des morts* étaient bien plus sombres et sont la preuve qu'à l'époque Janáček avait perdu cette paix intérieure qu'il avait connue durant la préparation et la composition de *La Petite Renarde*. Těsnohlídek, que Janáček avait convoqué pour discuter du projet auquel il venait de s'atteler, mit le doigt dessus:

Leoš Janáček m'attendait dans le petit jardin du Conservatoire. Il était assis au milieu des buissons, avec des milliers de fleurs minuscules au-dessus de la tête; sa tête était tout aussi blanche, on aurait dit la plus grosse des fleurs. Il me sourit; et je reconnus sur-le-champ le sourire que la vie nous offre comme une médaille d'or pour notre courage face à l'ennemi. Pour son courage dans la peine, l'humiliation et la colère.

A ce moment précis j'étais persuadé que Fine-Oreille était assise quelque part dans ce jardin minuscule, docile, émue par la gentillesse de cet homme, et qu'en cachette elle viendrait s'asseoir à nos pieds pour nous écouter conspirer. Janáček fit quelques commentaires sur l'histoire puis commença à parler de ses forêts là-bas à Valašsko, un coin que je ne connais pas, de ses recherches sur les cris d'oiseaux et c'est alors que je me rendis compte qu'il avait connu le bonheur de pouvoir sourire.

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Synopsis

COMPACT DISC ONE

Acte I

*"Comment Fine-Oreille fut attrapée"**

[1] Prélude: la forêt, par une après-midi d'été ensoleillée. D'un terrier, un blaireau émerge, fumant la pipe; des mouches font un ballet autour de lui; la libellule bleue danse.

[2] Tous se cachent à l'approche du garde-forestier. Se plaignant d'être las ("Going to be a storm soon"), il s'allonge pour se reposer. Comme il s'endort, un criquet et une

sauterelle apparaissent avec un minuscule orgue de Barbarie.

[3] Ils le mettent en marche ("Come on, old lady, and let's get the show started") et sont rejoints par un moustique et une grenouille.

[4] Une petite renarde entre en courant. Elle dévisage la grenouille ("Mummy! Mummy! What is that?") qui, terrifiée, atterrit d'un bond sur le nez du garde-forestier. Réveillé, le garde-forestier aperçoit la renarde, s'en saisit puis s'en va, l'animal sous le bras.

[5] La libellule bleue revient et cherche en vain la renarde; elle se pose et replie les ailes.

"Fine-Oreille dans la cour de la ferme du garde-forestier, au bord d'un lac"

[6] Interlude: la cour de la maison du garde-forestier, en automne. Lapák, le chien du garde-forestier, et la renarde sont allongés côte à côte.

[7] Le garde-forestier parle de la taille de la renarde ("Look at how big she's grown"); sa femme pose à terre une soucoupe pleine de lait. Lapák avoue à la renarde qu'il n'a jamais connu l'amour.

*Janáček ne numérotait pas les scènes mais donna un titre à celles où la renarde Fine-Oreille apparaît. Dans le livret que voici, ces titres sont imprimés entre guillemets et soulignés.

[8] Elle compatit ("I'm just the same too").

[9] Le fils du garde-forestier fait admirer fièrement à son ami son animal familier inhabituel ("Look what we've got down 'ere"); taquinée par ces garçons cruels, la renarde les attaque; le garde-forestier l'attache avec une laisse.

[10] Interlude: à la tombée de la nuit, la renarde endormie est transformée en jeune fille; elle pousse un cri dans son sommeil ("Ou, ou!").

[11] A l'aube, la renarde a retrouvé ses traits.

"Fine-Oreille fait de la politique"; "Fine-Oreille s'enfuit"

[12] Lapák lui explique comment éviter les ennuis ("You should take a lesson from me!"). Venus chercher leurs graines, le coq et les poules se moquent de la renarde qui ne peut pas pondre d'œufs.

[13] Elle reproche aux poules d'avoir une mentalité d'esclaves ("Sisters! Comrades!"). Dégoûtée par leur passivité et leur stupidité, elle s'en va sur le tas de détritux et fait semblant de s'enterrer vivante.

[14] Poussées par la poule en chef ("Come on then, don't be frightened"), les poules s'approchent, curieuses; la renarde leur tord le cou. Un acte qui lui vaut d'être battue par le

garde-forestier; elle casse sa laisse d'un coup de dents et s'enfuit.

Acte II

"Fine-Oreille s'approprie la maison d'un autre"

[15] Prélude: la forêt près du terrier du blaireau, en fin d'après-midi.

[16] La renarde jette un œil dans le terrier ("Ah!"), dérangeant le blaireau ("Who's that out there screaming?"). Avec le soutien des autres animaux de la forêt, elle provoque une dispute avec le blaireau et le chasse de sa maison.

[17] Interlude: nous sommes maintenant dans l'arrière-salle de l'auberge de Pásek.

[18] Le prêtre parle au garde-forestier et à l'instituteur de ses nouvelles circonstances ("In my new parish things have got to be better!").

[19] Le garde-forestier, un peu éméché, évoque le passé ("Once long since, long ago"), méditant sur le caractère inévitable du changement et du déclin. Lorsque l'instituteur lui demande des nouvelles de la renarde, il lui avoue avec humeur qu'elle s'est enfuie.

[20] Comme le garde-forestier s'appête à partir ("Home now?"), l'aubergiste le met en colère en lui demandant de ne pas l'oublier lorsqu'il s'occupera de la renarde.

[21] Interlude: nous sommes maintenant sur un chemin baigné de lune qui traverse la forêt.

[22] L'instituteur rentre chez lui en titubant ("Something is wrong with my equilibrium"). Il finit par tomber près d'un tournesol derrière lequel est cachée la renarde; elle agite malicieusement la fleur.

[23] L'instituteur fixe la fleur avec stupeur ("Staccato! Flageoletti!") puis, convaincu dans son ivresse que la fleur n'est autre que Terinka, la fille qu'il aime, il fait la culbute par-dessus la clôture dans un élan passionné.

[24] Le prêtre arrive alors, titubant, marmonnant des citations des classiques ("So remember to be a good man") et évoquant sa jeunesse.

[25] Il finit par retrouver d'où vient la citation ("Memnestho aner agathos einai"): il s'agit de l'Anabase de Xénophon. On entend dans le bois le garde-forestier tirer sur la renarde.

"Fine-Oreille se fait conter fleurette": "L'amour et le mariage de Fine-Oreille"

[26] Interlude: nous sommes près du terrier de la renarde par une chaude nuit d'été, à la lueur de la lune; elle est allongée, le museau sur les pattes, et écoute les voix de la Forêt.

[27] Un renard émerge. La renarde est tout de suite attirée par lui ("Oh my god! He's so handsome"). Timide au début, elle lui raconte

bientôt l'histoire de sa vie et l'impressionne par son esprit d'indépendance et son statut de propriétaire.

[28] Elle lui raconte comme elle s'est échappée du garde-forestier ("One dark night")

[29] Le renard se présente ("Fox Goldenstripe"); la renarde lui répond qu'elle s'appelle Fine-Oreille. Il lui fait la cour. Lorsqu'il apprend qu'elle aime le lapin, le renard prend congé poliment.

[30] La renarde, restée seule, jouit de cette sensation nouvelle d'être l'objet d'un admirateur ("Can it be that I am lovely?") jusqu'au retour du renard qui lui apporte un lapin. Il lui déclare son amour et la renarde en fait de même.

[31] Si l'ardeur du renard effraie momentanément sa compagne ("Let me go! I am afraid of you!"), ils finissent par disparaître ensemble dans le terrier. La libellule bleue exécute un ballet.

[32] Les oiseaux bavardent comme de vraies commères ("If you had only seen what I saw just now"). Lorsque le couple reparait au lever du soleil, la renarde sanglote. Elle murmure quelque chose à l'oreille du renard.

[33] Il comprend immédiatement ("That's how it is") et organise à la hâte un mariage, célébré par le pivert. Les créatures de la Forêt fêtent l'événement en dansant.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Acte III

"Fine-Oreille se montre plus maligne qu'Harašta de Lišen"; "La mort de Fine-Oreille"

[1] Prélude: c'est l'automne. Une clairière dans la forêt.

[2] Le braconnier Harašta avance sur le chemin en roucoulant ("In the month of May").

[3] Il aperçoit un lapin mort et s'apprête à le ramasser lorsque le garde-forestier l'interpelle ("Hey, there Harašta, how's it going?"). Voyant ses plans déjoués, Harašta annonce qu'il va épouser Terinka et qu'il ne braconnera plus jamais.

[4] Les deux hommes s'éloignent et des renardeaux émergent ("Little foxes running fast"). Ils dansent. La renarde et le renard inspectent le lapin mort et reconnaissent un piège.

[5] Ils parlent de leurs enfants ("How many children do we have?") et de ceux qui viendront peut-être les rejoindre.

[6] Harašta reparait, portant un panier rempli de poulets; il voit la renarde et saisit son fusil ("Put it down fast... Hurry, get your gun!"). Taquinée par Fine-Oreille qui le fait trébucher, il lui tire dessus et la tue.

[7] Interlude: dans le jardin de l'auberge.

[8] Le garde-forestier parle à l'instituteur du terrier abandonné ("Where is old man Pásek?"). Un renard mort, c'est un manchon neuf pour sa femme, dit-il. L'instituteur annonce que Terinka se marie aujourd'hui et la femme de l'aubergiste leur apprend que la mariée a un nouveau manchon. A cette nouvelle, l'instituteur se met à pleurer.

[9] Le garde-forestier, fort surpris ("Well I'm damned!"), console son ami.

"La jeune Fine-Oreille est le portrait craché de sa mère"

[10] Interlude: nous sommes dans la forêt, au même endroit qu'à l'acte premier.

[11] Le garde-forestier marche le long du vieux chemin et se souvient du temps où il était jeune marié ("Spring is here at last").

[12] Il se délecte de la beauté de la forêt ("When evening arrives"). Comme avant, il s'assoupit. A son réveil, il est entouré par les créatures de la forêt.

[13] Il se rend compte avec stupéfaction qu'il manque quelqu'un ("Hey! But I can't see the vixen there!") et il est ravi lorsqu'un tout petit renardeau s'avance vers lui en gambadant: il est certain qu'il s'agit de l'un des enfants de Fine-Oreille. Il étend la main pour l'attraper mais

tout ce qu'il saisit, c'est une grenouille ("Hey there! I remember you!").

^[14] La grenouille, qui sait ce qui s'est passé jadis, lui apprend avec suffisance ("Tha-that wasn't me") qu'elle est en fait la petite-fille de celle dont le garde-forestier se souvient. Le temps, les saisons, les générations, tout passe.

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Traduction: Nicole Valencia

Né dans le comté de Durham, **Thomas Allen** est l'une des grandes stars du monde de l'opéra. Il a chanté plus de quarante rôles au Royal Opera de Covent Garden où il a fêté en 2001 le trentième anniversaire de ses débuts avec cette compagnie. En 2002, il a célébré le vingtième anniversaire de ses débuts au Metropolitan Opera de New York.

Thomas Allen a été particulièrement acclamé pour ses interprétations de Billy Budd, Pelléas, Eugène Onéguine, Almaviva, Beckmesser et Don Giovanni. Également célèbre pour ses prestations en concert, il s'est produit en récital en Grande-Bretagne, à travers toute l'Europe, en Australie et en Amérique, et a réalisé de nombreux enregistrements.

Le premier livre de Thomas Allen, *Foreign Parts – A Singer's Journal*, a été publié en 1993.

Parmi les nombreux honneurs et prix qui lui ont été décernés figurent le titre de membre honoraire de la Royal Academy of Music de Londres, Prince Consort Professor du Royal College of Music de Londres, et Hambro Visiting Professor of Opera Studies de l'Université d'Oxford. Il a été fait commandeur de l'ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE) en 1989, et anobli par la reine Elisabeth II en 1999.

Lillian Watson est née à Londres où elle a étudié à la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Elle fit ses débuts sur scène dans le rôle de Papagena au Welsh National Opera, et ses débuts au Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres dans le rôle de Barbarina. Elle est célèbre dans le monde entier pour son interprétation de Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) qu'elle a chanté à Glyndebourne, Covent Garden, Hambourg et au Festival de Salzbourg. Parmi ses autres rôles figurent Despina (*Così fan tutte*) à Vienne, Glyndebourne, Aix-en-Provence et Covent Garden; Ismène et Aspasie (*Mitridate*) à Venise, Paris et Londres. Elle s'est également produite au Welsh National Opera, à l'English National Opera, à l'Opéra de Genève, à l'Opéra de Lausanne, à l'Opéra de Rome, au

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, en Israël, à Toulouse et à Anvers.

La discographie de Lillian Watson inclut le rôle de Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) sous la direction de Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *The Geisha* de Sydney Jones, et le rôle de Fido dans l'enregistrement réalisé par Chandos de *Paul Bunyan* de Benjamin Britten.

Diana Montague est née à Winchester, et a fait ses études au Royal Northern College of Music de Manchester. Depuis ses débuts dans le rôle de Zerlina avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera, elle s'est produite dans des salles telles que le Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres, le Metropolitan Opera de New York, le Théâtre de la Monnaie de Bruxelles, l'Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, le Teatro Colon de Buenos Aires, et dans les festivals de Bayreuth et de Salzbourg.

Le répertoire de Diana Montague compte les grands rôles de mezzo-soprano dans les opéras de Mozart, Gluck, Strauss, Rossini, Bellini et Berlioz, et ses fréquents engagements en concert incluent des prestations sous la direction de Georg Solti, James Levine, Riccardo Muti, John Eliot Gardiner, Seiji Ozawa, Jeffrey Tate et Andrew Davies.

Diana Montague a réalisé de nombreux

enregistrements, notamment l'*Orfeo* de Monteverdi, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*; pour Opera Rara, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata* et *Il crociato in Egitto*; pour Chandos et la Peter Moores Foundation, *Cavalleria rusticana*, le rôle d'Octavian dans *Der Rosenkavalier* (extraits), *Faust*, et deux disques de la série "Great Operatic Arias".

Né et éduqué au Pays de Galles, **Robert Tear** devint un "choral scholar" au King's College de Cambridge. Il est régulièrement invité au Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres où il s'est produit chaque saison depuis ses débuts en 1970. En 1988/1989, il a fait ses débuts à l'English National Opera dans *The Turn of the Screw* de Britten, et la saison suivante vit ses débuts avec le Glyndebourne Touring Opera dans le rôle d'Aschenbach (*Death in Venice*). Parmi ses autres prestations figurent Gawain et *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Royal Opera House), *Le nozze di Figaro* (Welsh National Opera et Opéra national de Paris-Bastille), *Billy Budd* (Los Angeles Opera), et *The Palace in the Sky* de Jonathan Dove dans le cadre du Bayliss Programme de l'English National Opera. Ses enregistrements incluent le *War Requiem* de Britten, *Das klagende Lied* de Mahler, le

Winterreise de Schubert, et pour Chandos, *Albert Herring*, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* de Dyson et *King Priam* de Tippett.

Comme chef d'orchestre, Robert Tear a travaillé avec les London Mozart Players, le Northern Sinfonia, l'English Chamber Orchestra, le Philharmonia Orchestra, le Royal Scottish National Orchestra, l'Orchestre de chambre de Toulouse, et le Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Robert Tear est membre honoraire du King's College de Cambridge, et en 1984 il a été fait commandeur de l'ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE).

Né à Swansea au Pays de Galles, **Gwynne Howell** obtint des diplômes de l'University College of Wales et de la Manchester University avant de poursuivre ses études de chant au Royal Northern College of Music. En 1968, il devint membre du Sadler's Wells Opera. Depuis qu'il est entré au Royal Opera de Covent Garden en 1972, il y a chanté la plupart des grands rôles de basse dans *Aida*, *Rigoletto*, *Otello*, *La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Don Giovanni*, *Eugène Onéguine*, *Parsifal*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Palestrina* et *Stiffelio*. Il s'est également produit régulièrement à l'English National Opera, au Welsh National Opera, à l'Opera North et à

Glyndebourne. Son importante carrière internationale l'a conduit au Metropolitan Opera de New York, au Chicago Lyric Opera, à San Francisco, Santa Fe, Toronto, Hambourg, Cologne, Munich, Paris, Genève et Bruxelles.

Parmi les nombreux enregistrements de Gwynne Howell figurent la Huitième Symphonie de Mahler, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Luisa Miller*, *Tristan und Isolde*, le *Messie* de Haendel, et la Neuvième Symphonie de Beethoven.

Né à Liverpool, **Simon Rattle** a fait ses études à la Royal Academy of Music de Londres. En 1974, il remporta le premier prix de la John Player International Conducting Competition, et devint chef assistant du Bournemouth Symphony et du Bournemouth Sinfonietta. Par la suite, il fut le chef invité de divers orchestres, et fut nommé chef principal invité de l'Orchestre philharmonique de Rotterdam.

En 1980, il devint chef principal et conseiller artistique du City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, puis directeur musical de septembre 1990 à août 1998. Depuis octobre 1992, il est chef principal invité de l'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, et

conseiller artistique du Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. Il a été nommé chef et directeur artistique du Berliner Philharmoniker, à la suite d'Herbert von Karajan et de Daniel Barenboim, et a pris ses fonctions en septembre 2002.

Simon Rattle a été chef principal invité du Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra de 1981 à 1994, et s'est produit à la tête de l'Orchestre de Cleveland, et des orchestres symphoniques de Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto et Boston. Il fit ses débuts à New York en 1985 avec le Los Angeles Philharmonic, et y revint en 1988 avec le City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Il a dirigé des opéras tels que *Parsifal* et *Sophie's Choice* de Nicholas Maw au Royal Opera de Covent Garden à Londres, *Wozzeck* à l'Opéra de Los Angeles, *Parsifal* et *Tristan und Isolde* à l'Opéra des Pays-Bas,

Katya Kabanova à l'English National Opera, *Idomeneo* et les opéras de Mozart/Da Ponte à Glyndebourne.

Simon Rattle a enregistré plus de soixante disques, et a été couronné par de nombreux prix internationaux. Son émission pour la chaîne de télévision britannique Channel 4 intitulée *Leaving Home* a obtenu le prix "Best Arts Programme or Series" décerné par BAFTA, tandis que plusieurs de ses programmes récents réalisés à Berlin ont été télévisés. Simon Rattle a reçu plusieurs distinctions en reconnaissance de sa contribution exceptionnelle pour la musique, et de ses efforts pour la promotion de l'éducation et des activités locales. En 1987, il a été fait commandeur de l'ordre de l'empire britannique (CBE), et a été anobli par la reine Elisabeth II en 1994.

Un sorriso come una medaglia d'oro

Non vedo l'ora di finire l'opera! In estate a Luhačovice ci ho pensato tanto, la porto come me, ci lavoro. Certo, ci vorranno sicuramente due anni... "Sarà un'opera nel senso normale?" ho chiesto – sarà necessario recitarla oltre che parlare, ma come animali. Volpi, rane e ranocchie, moscerini – ma la conoscete dal libro. Sarà opera e mimo. "Come sarebbe", dico io, "come lo *Chanteclair* di Rostand?" – Gli animali antropomorfi di *Chanteclair* si limitano a filosofeggiare. Nella mia *Volpe* ci sarà azione drammatica, azione di scena. E poi gli animali! Per anni li ho ascoltati, imparando a memoria il loro linguaggio; con loro mi trovo a mio agio).

(da "La nuova opera di Leoš Janáček",
Lidové noviny, 15 Maggio 1921)

La notizia si era diffusa in fretta a Brno, città natale di Janáček: il soggetto della sua prossima opera era *Liška Bystrouška* di Rudolf Těsnohlídek. Una scelta fuori del comune. Il romanzo, originariamente scritto per accompagnare una serie di disegni del pittore Stanislav Lolek, descrive la vita di una volpe catturata da piccola e allevata in casa di un guardacaccia. La volpe finisce per fuggire,

trova un compagno e si crea una famiglia. Il romanzo, pubblicato a puntate sul quotidiano *Lidové noviny* di Brno nella primavera del 1920, è un'evocazione affettuosa e attenta della vita nei boschi nei dintorni della città (il dialogo si svolge in gran parte nel suo rozzo dialetto). La vita umana è incentrata sul guardacaccia Bartoš e i suoi due compagni di bisboccia, il parroco e il maestro. Viene descritta anche una serie di animali: il cane del guardacaccia e le sue galline, la volpe e la sua famiglia, persino gli animali, gli uccelli e gli insetti della foresta. Gli animali parlano tra di loro, ma non con gli uomini.

Cosa avesse spinto Janáček a comporre l'opera non è chiaro. In un famoso brano delle sue memorie, la fedele domestica della famiglia Janáček, Marie Stejskalová, sostiene che il compositore l'avesse vista ridere mentre leggeva l'ultima puntata sul giornale e lei aveva dichiarato immediatamente che sarebbe stato un meraviglioso soggetto per un'opera, specialmente per chi, come lui, era interessato alla notazione dei versi animali. La tesi viene rovinata dall'insinuazione che solo allora Janáček avrebbe iniziato a leggere e raccogliere

le puntate via via che venivano pubblicate: se così fosse stato ne avrebbe acquistato solo altre sei, dal momento che l'episodio di cui parla la domestica si colloca verso la fine del romanzo. Ad ogni modo, comunque, Janáček si procurò una collezione quasi completa di ritagli del giornale. Sebbene questi ultimi contengano alcuni suoi segni a matita, è chiaro che il compositore lavorò soprattutto dal romanzo in volume, pubblicato l'anno successivo (1921). La sua copia è piena di annotazioni interessanti in cui cominciano a delinearsi il libretto, l'ordine degli eventi e il dialogo, con il suo accento sulla ciclicità delle stagioni e gli accoppiamenti vocali di alcuni personaggi. A quell'epoca Janáček componeva già tutti i propri libretti. Těsnohlídek scrisse solo una canzone per lui (il brano del Guardacaccia nella scena dell'osteria dell'Atto II); i restanti brani, tutti nell'Atto III, sono ricavati da famosi testi popolari (i motivi, come sempre, erano del compositore). Il libretto di Janáček seguiva molto da vicino il romanzo di Těsnohlídek. La forma dell'atto III è originale; il compositore riunì ingegnosamente qui diversi episodi del romanzo.

Quando si diffuse la voce della nuova, strana opera di Janáček il quotidiano *Lidové noviny* inviò il reporter Adolf Veselý a intervistare il compositore. Come dimostra

l'estratto riportato sopra, Janáček fu sorprendentemente aperto e, sebbene non avesse ancora composto la musica, dimostrò di avere le idee chiare sulla forma e la natura generale dell'opera. Particolarmente interessante è la sua enfasi sul mimo. L'idea è presente anche nelle note aggiunte al romanzo in cui chiede un "balletto": l'evocazione del mondo animale fu ottenuta infine attraverso un'audace misto di danza/mimo e voci, soprattutto quelle dei bambini per gli animali più piccoli e gli insetti. Due settimane dopo, come ulteriore assaggio dell'opera, il compositore pubblicò sul *Lidové noviny* uno dei suoi saltuari "feuilleton", il primo di molti in cui descriveva con le note il canto degli uccelli. Il pezzo termina così: "Come mai tutte queste parole sulle robuste note del cardellino [...]? Intanto mi piace così, e poi raccolgo compagni adatti per Liška Bystrouška" (*Lidové noviny*, 1 giugno 1921).

Tuttavia Janáček era ancora impegnato nelle ultime correzioni alla *Kát'a Kabanová* la cui prima si svolse a Brno il 12 novembre 1921. E il lavoro alla *Kát'a Kabanová* continuò anche dopo questa data, in risposta a suggerimenti avanzati da Max Brod, impegnato a tradurre il testo in tedesco. Solo più tardi, verso la fine dell'anno, il compositore parlò nuovamente

della sua nuova opera in un improvviso post scriptum allegato a una lettera priva di data e diretta a Brod: “Fammi gli auguri anche per la *Liška Bystrouška!*”. Il lavoro effettivo iniziò nel nuovo anno 1922. Nell’agosto 1922 era pronta una prima stesura dei primi due atti e ad essi, dopo una pausa in estate, fu aggiunto l’ultimo atto nel novembre 1922, quando il teatro di Brno fece un’offerta preliminare per i diritti di allestimento. Come sempre per Janáček questa versione era solo un abbozzo preliminare molto rozzo e nel corso dell’anno successivo il compositore realizzò un rifacimento completo, terminandolo entro il 10 ottobre 1923. La prima rappresentazione si svolse a Brno poco più di un anno dopo, il 6 novembre 1924.

Janáček rimase particolarmente soddisfatto dell’allestimento di Brno, come riferì Marie Stejskalová nelle sue memorie:

Il maestro è rimasto molto contento della prima della *Volpe* a Brno. Tornava dalle prove ridendo di come i cantanti imparavano ad andare a quattro zampe. Il capo dell’opera [František] Neumann, il produttore [Ota] Zitek, e il pittore [Eduard] Milén, che ha disegnato le scene, hanno fatto un bellissimo lavoro. È rimasto sorpreso anche il maestro.

* * *

Ho iniziato a scrivere *Liška Bystrouška*. Una cosetta allegra con un finale triste: e io stesso occupo un posto in quel finale triste. Ed è il mio posto!

(Janáček a Kamila Stösslová, 10 febbraio 1922)

Non c’è dubbio che per molti versi l’opera composta da Janáček sia una “cosetta allegra”. È di gran lunga la sua opera teatrale più spensierata e l’espedito degli animali antropomorfi produce diversi momenti di pura commedia. A prima vista si potrebbe pensare che la “conclusione triste” sia la morte della volpe, sorprendentemente aggiunta da Janáček al romanzo originale. Tuttavia l’episodio arriva nella penultima e non nell’ultima scena dell’opera ed è notevole per il suo ritratto musicale: un colpo di fucile seguito dal silenzio. Così Janáček evita di presentare volpi e cuccioli addolorati; la prevedibile evocazione musicale del pathos o persino della tragedia è assente. La conclusione “triste” va ricercata altrove.

L’indizio è rivelato nella suggestiva autoidentificazione del compositore con la conclusione della sua opera (“Ed è il mio posto”) e con la tristezza del tempo che passa e della vecchiaia. Quando completò *La volpe astuta* il compositore era vicino alla settantina. Descrivendo la scena finale a Max Brod

(11 marzo 1923) scrisse: “Il Guardacaccia e il Maestro di scuola invecchiano; il Parroco si trasferisce – È primavera nella foresta – ma anche vecchiaia.” Qui, e anche nell’opera, Janáček punta l’attenzione su tre aspetti: vecchiaia, cambiamento e rinnovamento ciclico. Ognuno evoca un senso del trascorrere del tempo. La penultima scena dell’opera ci rende consapevoli di diversi cambiamenti nei mondi umano e animale: l’osteria dove il Guardacaccia e i suoi compagni si incontrano viene ridipinta; Terynka, la ragazza di cui parlano e fantasticano, si sposa proprio quel giorno; il Parroco si è trasferito in un altro villaggio; le volpi hanno abbandonato la tana; e il Guardacaccia si accorge che lui e il suo cane soffrono sempre più dei dolori dell’età. Il punto culminante dell’opera viene raggiunto nella lunga scena del Guardacaccia. Come il Maestro e il Parroco prima di lui nell’atto precedente, il Guardacaccia ripensa alla sua vita, soprattutto alla giovinezza e alla felicità della luna di miele. Ricorda l’inizio della vita matrimoniale che, significativamente, coincide con il rinnovamento primaverile della foresta – “quando arrivano maggio e l’amore!” Qui la descrizione del tempo non è lineare, ma ciclica, non fonte di tristezza, ma “gioia più che terrena”.

Quest’importanza della natura ciclica della vita viene ottenuta in maniera commovente negli ultimi momenti dell’opera attraverso una sequenza onirica che rievoca il luogo e gli animali della prima scena: l’inizio del racconto in cui il Guardacaccia cattura la Volpe. Questa conclusione che si rifà all’inizio, con una visione della “piccola Bystrouška, immagine vivente di sua madre” (titolo assegnato da Janáček alla scena), ci consente di collocare la morte della Volpe entro una prospettiva che abbraccia il rinnovamento perenne. La consapevolezza di vivere nel tempo e attraverso il tempo produce un’ottica per cui la morte e la vita della Volpe non vengono considerate tragicamente limitate, ma sono viste come contributo a un ciclo di vita più grande, infinitamente continuo.

È come se in quest’opera Janáček avesse fatto pace con se stesso e con una vita che non era stata né facile, né felice né fino a poco tempo prima, molto fortunata. La sua terza opera *Jenůfa* (1894–1903), rappresentata in coincidenza con il suo cinquantesimo anno, aveva dovuto aspettare altri dodici anni per essere riconosciuta al di là di minuscolo centro provinciale di Brno. Il compositore aveva dovuto comporre altre due opere, entrambe lavori sperimentali molto riveduti, prima di arrivare alla piena maturità. Ma a quel punto

aveva superato i sessant'anni. *Osud* (*Destino*) (1903–1907) non fu mai rappresentata durante la sua vita, *I viaggi del signor Brouček* (1908–17) fu eseguita nel 1920 a Praga (l'unica prima del compositore in questa città) ma fu accolta con freddezza. La vita personale di Janáček non era stata tanto più facile: il suo matrimonio era andato male fin dall'inizio e aveva perso ogni significato dopo la morte prematura dei due figli. Il compositore si era rifugiato in una serie di relazioni; quella più seria con la cantante Gabriela Horvátová (la prima Kostelníčka in *Jenůfa* a Praga) alla fine spinse sua moglie a un fallito tentativo di suicidio. La sua sesta opera, *Kát'a Kabanová* (1919–1921), fu la più cupa e tragica; l'eroina, strettamente identificata nell'epistolario del compositore con la sua ultima fiamma, Kamila Stösslová, muore tra i melodrammatici rantoli di un "tema fatale". Ma a quel punto si era delineata una svolta. Con *Kát'a Kabanová* Janáček aveva iniziato la miracolosa sequenza delle quattro ultime opere su cui, insieme con *Jenůfa* e i lavori non teatrali del suo ultimo decennio, oggi si fonda la sua reputazione. Con un energico editore austriaco, la Universal Edition, che promosse entusiasticamente *Jenůfa* in tutto il mondo di lingua tedesca e oltre, il compositore si fece

rapidamente conoscere e riuscì anche ad arricchirsi. Nella composizione aveva finalmente trovato un tocco sicuro che gli consentì di produrre capolavori originali fino alla morte che lo colse settantaquattrenne. Nella sua vita personale, la sua amicizia con Kamila Stösslová (iniziata nel 1917), era ancora un decoroso passatempo, svolto per lo più in forma epistolare e non era divenuto l'ossessione appassionata che lo avrebbe travolto negli ultimi anni. Aveva persino raggiunto un accordo con la tollerante moglie.

La volpe astuta sembra un'espressione della soddisfazione per la vita conquistata con difficoltà e a lungo perseguita da Janáček, un'opera composta su un piano di serenità personale e realizzazione artistica. In essa il compositore fu finalmente in grado di contemplare i suoi anni e l'avvicinarsi della morte entro un quadro filosofico in cui la vita aveva assunto un senso. Il romanzo leggero, con le sue origini fumettistiche (Janáček lo definisce in una lettera "romanzo per signorine") offriva un punto di partenza, anche se la creazione teatrale fu molto più profonda e saggia ed estremamente personale: la grande scena del Guardacaccia alla fine dell'opera fu eseguita, secondo le istruzioni del compositore, al suo funerale. Per molti versi considerata oggi

l'opera più accessibile di Janáček, *La Volpe* non mostra segni di compiacimento. Le modalità drammatiche che sperimenta – l'esclusivo accostamento di danza e canto, lo strano mescolarsi dei mondi animale e umano, la successione cinematografica di brevissime scenette, erano avanzati per il loro tempo, e furono necessari molti decenni prima che pubblico e critica fossero conquistati. Le due opere che seguirono, *L'affare Makropulos* e *Da una casa di morti*, furono molto più cupe e si potrebbero considerare la dimostrazione del fatto che il compositore aveva perso l'equilibrio che l'aveva accompagnato durante la progettazione e la composizione della *Volpe*. Těsnohlídek, convocato da Janáček per parlare del progetto con lui poco dopo l'inizio dell'opera, lo capì:

Leoš Janáček attendeva nel giardinetto del Conservatorio. Stava seduto tra i cespugli, sotto migliaia di minuscoli fiorellini bianchi; la sua testa era altrettanto bianca e sembrava il fiore più grande. Sorrise: e io capii subito che il suo era il sorriso che la vita ci concede come una medaglia d'oro al valore di fronte al nemico, al dolore, all'umiliazione e all'ira. In quel momento pensai che Liška Bystrouška fosse seduta, addomesticata e completamente sopraffatta dalla gentilezza dell'uomo nel giardinetto e che, non vista, si sarebbe avvicinata per sedersi ai nostri piedi e

ascoltare il nostro colloquio. Janáček fece alcune osservazioni sulla storia e poi iniziò a parlare delle sue foreste di Valašsko, che io non conosco, dei suoi studi sul verso degli uccelli e mi resi conto che era riuscito a capire la felicità di riuscire a sorridere.

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La trama

COMPACT DISC ONE

Atto I

*"Come la volpe Bystrouška venne catturata"**

[1] Preludio: La foresta, un pomeriggio d'estate pieno di sole. Il Tasso fa capolino dalla sua tana, fumando una lunga pipa. Gli volteggiano intorno i moscerini in un balletto; la Libellula azzurra danza.

[2] Tutti si nascondono quando si avvicina un Guardacaccia che si lamenta d'essere stanco ("Going to be a storm soon") e poi si stende a riposare. Mentre si appisola, un Grillo e una Cavalletta compaiono con un organetto.

*Janáček non numerò le scene, ma assegnò titoli a quelle in cui compare la Volpe Bystrouška. In questo opuscolo i titoli sono sottolineati.

[3] Si mettono a suonare (“Come on, old lady, and let’s get the show started”) e a loro si aggiungono una Zanzara e una Rana.

[4] Entra di corsa la volpe Bystrouška. Osserva la Rana (“Mummy! Mummy! What is that?”), che fa un balzo, terrorizzata, e cade proprio sul naso del Guardacaccia, risvegliandolo. L’uomo s’avvede della Volpe, l’afferra e si allontana tenendola sotto il braccio.

[5] Ritorna la Libellula Azzurra, cerca inutilmente la Volpe, poi si posa ripiegando le ali.

“Bystrouška nel cortile della casa del guardacaccia”

[6] Interludio: il cortile della capanna del Guardacaccia. Il cane del Guardacaccia, Lapák, e la Volpe sono sdraiati uno accanto all’altra.

[7] Il Guardacaccia fa un commento sulle dimensioni della Volpe (“Look at how big she’s grown!”); sua moglie le versa del latte in un piattino. Lapák confessa alla Volpe che non ha mai conosciuto l’amore.

[8] Lei solidarizza (“I’m just the same too”).

[9] Il figlio del Guardacaccia sfoggia orgogliosamente l’inconsueto animale domestico a un amico (“Look what we’ve got down ’ere”); crudelmente stuzzicata dai ragazzi, la Volpe li attacca; il Guardacaccia la mette al guinzaglio.

[10] Interludio: Scende la notte, la Volpe addormentata si trasforma in una fanciulla; piange nel sonno (“Ou, ou!”).

[11] È l’alba e la Volpe riprende la forma di animale.

“Bystrouška fa politica”: “Bystrouška fugge”

[12] Lapák offre dei consigli per tenersi lontano dai guai (“You should take a lesson from me!”). Di ritorno dal loro pasto, le Galline e il Gallo deridono la Volpe perché non depone uova.

[13] Lei rimprovera le Galline per la loro mentalità servile (“Sisters! Comrades!”). Trovandole stupidamente insensibili, si ritira tra un cumulo di rifiuti e finge di seppellirsi viva.

[14] Sollecitate dalla prima Gallina (“Come on then, don’t be frightened”), le Galline si avvicinano curiose; la Volpe le uccide una per una. Per questo il Guardacaccia la picchia, lei taglia il guinzaglio con i denti e fugge.

Atto II

“Bystrouška compie un esproprio”

[15] Preludio: la foresta vicino alla tana del tasso. Tardo pomeriggio.

[16] La Volpe sbircia nella tana (“Ah!”), disturbando il tasso (“Who’s that out there

screaming?”). Con l’aiuto degli animali della foresta, inizia una lite e lo caccia via.

[17] Interludio: cambia la scena e si passa al brusio dell’osteria di Pásek.

[18] Il Parroco dice al Guardacaccia e al Maestro di scuola che sta per trasferirsi in una nuova parrocchia (“In my new parish things have got to be better!”).

[19] Il Guardacaccia è preso dai ricordi (“Once long since, long ago”), e riflette tra i fumi del vino sull’inevitabilità del cambiamento e del declino. Quando il Maestro di scuola chiede della Volpe, ammette seccato che è fuggita.

[20] Il Maestro si prepara ad andarsene (“Home now?”), mentre l’Oste irrita il Guardacaccia chiedendogli di ricordare di dirgli qualcosa sulla Volpe.

[21] Interludio: la scena cambia e adesso siamo su un sentiero illuminato dalla luna che attraversa la foresta.

[22] Lungo il sentiero il Maestro si avvia barcollando a casa (“Something is wrong with my equilibrium”). Finisce per cadere vicino a un girasole dietro cui si nasconde la Volpe, che lo scuote maliziosamente.

[23] Il maestro guarda stupito (“Staccato! Flageoletti!”) finché, convinto nella sua ubriacatura che il fiore sia Terynka, la fanciulla

di cui è innamorato, scavalca la siepe in un impeto di passione.

[24] Arriva il Parroco dal sentiero borbottando citazioni dei classici (“So remember to be a good man”) e ricordando la propria gioventù.

[25] Alla fine ricorda la citazione dell’Anabasi di Senofonte (“Memnestho aner agathos einai”). Si sente il Guardacaccia che spara alla Volpe nel bosco.

“Bystrouška corteggiata”: “Amore e matrimonio di Bystrouška”

[26] Interludio: cambio di scena: siamo nella tana della Volpe, una sera calda d’estate sotto il chiaro di luna. La Volpe accovacciata posa il muso sulle zampe anteriori ascoltando le voci della Foresta.

[27] Esce un volpe maschio. La Volpe si sente subito attratta (“Oh my god! He’s so handsome”). Timida all’inizio, ben presto gli racconta la sua storia e lo colpisce per la sua indipendenza e la sua importanza: è proprietaria di una tana.

[28] Poi gli racconta come è sfuggita al Guardacaccia (“One dark night”).

[29] Il maschio si presenta (“Fox Goldenstripe”); la Volpe rivela di chiamarsi Bystrouška. Il corteggiamento prosegue.

Sentendole dire che le piace il coniglio, il maschio si scusa educatamente.

[30] La Volpe si delizia nella nuova sensazione di essere ammirata (“Can it be that I am lovely?”) finché il maschio ritorna con un coniglio ed entrambi si dichiarano.

[31] Sebbene l’ardore del maschio la spaventi per un attimo (“Let me go! I am afraid of you!”) alla fine entrambi scompaiono insieme nella tana. La Libellula azzurra si produce in una danza.

[32] Gli uccelli spettegolano come pescivendole (“If you had only seen what I saw just now”). Quando la coppia riemerge all’alba, la Volpe singhiozza. Sussurra qualcosa all’orecchio del maschio.

[33] Lui capisce al volo (“That’s how it is”) e si organizza in tutta fretta un matrimonio, celebrato dal Picchio. Le Creature della foresta festeggiano con un balletto.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Atto III

“Bystrouška fronteggia Harašta” – “Come Bystrouška trova la morte”

[1] Preludio: Autunno. Una radura nella foresta.

[2] Harašta, venditore ambulante, cammina

cantando lungo il sentiero (“In the month of May”).

[3] Vede un coniglio morto e sta per prenderlo quando il Guardacaccia lo chiama (“Hey there, Harašta, how’s it going?”). Confuso, Harašta annuncia che sta per sposare Terynka e non farà più il bracconiere.

[4] Mentre si allontanano, compaiono alcuni volpacchiotti a passo di danza (“Little foxes running fast”). La Volpe e il suo consorte esaminano il coniglio morto e subodorano la trappola.

[5] Parlano della loro prole (“How many children do we have?”) e di possibili aggiunte.

[6] Ricompare Harašta con una cesta di polli, vede la Volpe e tira fuori il fucile (“Put it down fast... Hurry, get your gun!”). Schernito da Bystrouška che lo fa incespicare, spara e la uccide.

[7] Interludio: cambiamento di scena: giardino dell’osteria.

[8] Il Guardacaccia racconta al Maestro di scuola della tana abbandonata (“Where is old man Pásek?”). Una volpe morta significa un manicotto nuovo per sua moglie, dice. Il Maestro annuncia che Terynka si sposa oggi e la moglie dell’Oste dice che la sposina ha un manicotto nuovo. La notizia fa venire le lacrime agli occhi del Maestro.

[9] Il Guardacaccia, molto sorpreso (“Well I’m damned!”), consola il suo amico.

“Una piccola Bystrouška immagine vivente di sua madre”

[10] Interludio: cambiamento di scena: si torna nella stessa parte della foresta dell’Atto I.

[11] Il Guardacaccia cammina lungo il sentiero, ricordando i primi tempi del suo matrimonio (“Spring is here at last”).

[12] Ammira la bellezza della foresta (“When evening arrives”). Come prima, si appisola. Quando si sveglia, è circondato dagli animali della foresta.

[13] Immerso nei propri pensieri, nota che ne manca uno (“Hey! But I can’t see the vixen there!”), ed è felice quando una volpacchiotta gli si avvicina correndo: è certo che si tratti di una figlia della Volpe. Allunga la mano per prenderla ma si accorge di avere afferrato una rana (“Hey there! I remember you!”).

[14] La Rana, che sa cosa è accaduto prima, gli comunica compiaciuta (“Tha-that wasn’t me”) che è nipote di quella che ricorda il Guardacaccia. Il tempo, le stagioni, tutto continua.

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Nato in County Durham, in Inghilterra, **Thomas Allen** è una star dell’opera riconosciuta a livello internazionale. Si è esibito in oltre quaranta ruoli presso la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, dove nel 2001 ha celebrato il trentesimo anniversario del suo esordio con la compagnia. Nel 2002 ha poi celebrato il ventesimo anniversario del suo debutto alla Metropolitan Opera di New York.

Particolarmente applaudite sono state le sue interpretazioni di Billy Budd, Pelléas, Eugene Onegin, Conte Almaviva, Beckmesser e Don Giovanni. Ugualmente apprezzati sono, oltre alle numerose incisioni, anche i suoi frequenti concerti, che lo vendono impegnato in recital in tutta Europa, Australia e America.

Il primo libro di Thomas Allen, *Foreign Parts – A Singer’s Journal*, è stato pubblicato nel 1993. Le innumerevoli onorificenze da lui ricevute includono l’Honorary Membership della Royal Academy of Music, la carica di Prince Consort Professor del Royal College of Music, e l’Hambro Visiting Professor of Opera Studies presso l’università di Oxford. In occasione dei New Year’s Honours del 1989 è stato nominato Comandante dell’Ordine dell’Impero britannico, mentre nel 1999 è stato nominato Cavaliere in occasione dei Queen’s Birthday Honours.

Lillian Watson è nata a Londra e ha studiato presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Ha debuttato nell'opera con la Welsh National Opera nel ruolo di Papagena, e poi ha esordito con la Royal Opera nelle vesti di Barbarina. È nota a livello internazionale per la sua interpretazione di Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), da lei portata a Glyndebourne, Covent Garden, Amburgo e al Festival di Salisburgo. Altri ruoli includono Despina (*Così fan tutte*) a Vienna, a Glyndebourne, Aix e Covent Garden; e i personaggi di Ismène e Aspasia (*Mitridate*), da lei cantati a Venezia, Parigi e Londra. Lillian Watson si è esibita anche con la Welsh National Opera, l'English National Opera, la Geneva Opera, la Lausanne Opera, l'Opera di Roma, al Théâtre des Champs Elysées, e in Israele, a Tolosa e Anversa.

Le sue incisioni comprendono Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) con Nikolaus Harnoncourt, *The Geisha* di Sydney Jones, e Fido in *Paul Bunyan* di Britten, realizzata per la Chandos.

Diana Montague è nata a Winchester, in Gran Bretagna, e ha studiato presso il Royal Northern College of Music. Dal suo debutto nelle vesti di Zerlina con la Glyndebourne

Touring Opera si è esibita in teatri come la Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, la Metropolitan Opera di New York, il Théâtre de la Monnaie a Bruxelles, l'Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, il Teatro Colon a Buenos Aires e in occasione dei Festival di Bayreuth e Salisburgo.

Il suo repertorio comprende i principali ruoli per mezzo-soprano nelle opere di Mozart, Gluck, Strauss, Rossini, Bellini e Berlioz, e i suoi frequenti concerti includono esibizioni rese sotto la direzione di Sir Georg Solti, James Levine, Riccardo Muti, John Eliot Gardiner, Seiji Ozawa, Jeffrey Tate e Andrew Davis.

Le numerose incisioni di Diana Montague comprendono *Orfeo* di Monteverdi, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Zoraida di Granata* e *Il crociato in Egitto* per Opera Rara; e per Chandos/Peter Moores Foundation, *Cavalleria rusticana*, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (estratti), *Faust*, e due dischi di Grandi Arie Operistiche.

Robert Tear è nato e ha studiato nel Galles, diventando poi borsista nel coro del King's College, Cambridge. Si esibisce regolarmente in qualità di ospite presso la Royal Opera

House, Covent Garden, dopo aver calcato il palcoscenico di questo prestigioso teatro ogni anno dal suo esordio nel 1970. Nel 1988/89 ha debuttato con la English National Opera in *The Turn of the Screw* e la stagione seguente lo ha visto debuttare nel ruolo di Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* con la Glyndebourne Touring Opera. Altre esibizioni includono *Gawain e Tales of Hoffmann* (Royal Opera House), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Welsh National Opera e Opéra National de Paris-Bastille), *Billy Budd* (Los Angeles Opera), e *The Palace in the Sky* di Jonathan Dove per il Bayliss Programme della English National Opera. Le sue incisioni includono *War Requiem* di Britten, *Das klagende Lied* di Mahler, *Die Winterreise* e, per Chandos, *Albert Herring*, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* di Dyson e *King Priam* di Tippett.

In qualità di direttore ha collaborato con i London Mozart Players, la Northern Sinfonia, la English Chamber Orchestra, la Philharmonia Orchestra, la Royal Scottish National Orchestra, la Toulouse Chamber Orchestra e la Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Robert Tear è Honorary Fellow del King's College, Cambridge, e nel 1984 è stato nominato Comandante dell'Ordine dell'Impero britannico.

Gwynne Howell è nata nei pressi di Swansea, in Gran Bretagna, e si è laureata presso l'università del Galles e quella di Manchester prima di dedicarsi ai suoi studi di canto al Royal Northern College of Music. Nel 1968 è entrata a far parte della compagnia della Sadler's Wells Opera. Trasferitasi alla Royal Opera nel 1972, ha cantato nei principali ruoli di basso con la compagnia, in allestimenti di *Aida*, *Rigoletto*, *Otello*, *La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Don Giovanni*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Parsifal*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Palestrina e Stiffelio*. Si è esibita con regolarità anche con la English National Opera, la Welsh National Opera, l'Opera North e Glyndebourne. La sua lunga carriera internazionale l'ha portata alla Metropolitan Opera di New York, alla Lyric Opera di Chicago, a San Francisco, Santa Fe, Toronto, Amburgo, Colonia, Monaco, Parigi, Ginevra e Bruxelles.

Le numerose incisioni di Gwynne Howell includono Mahler 8, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Luisa Miller*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *Messiah* e la Nona Sinfonia di Beethoven.

Simon Rattle è nato a Liverpool, in Gran Bretagna, nel 1955 e ha studiato presso la Royal Academy of Music a Londra. Nel 1974 ha vinto il primo premio nel John Player

International Conducting Competition ed è diventato Vice Direttore della Bournemouth Symphony and Sinfonietta. In seguito è stato titolare di varie cariche, tra cui quella di Direttore Ospite Principale della Rotterdam Philharmonic.

Nel 1980 è diventato Direttore Principale e Consigliere Artistico della City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, e poi suo Direttore Musicale, mantenendo la carica dal settembre 1990 all'agosto 1998. Dall'ottobre 1992 è Direttore Ospite Principale dell'Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment ed è anche Consigliere Artistico del Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. È stato nominato Direttore Capo e Direttore Artistico della Berliner Philharmoniker, come già Herbert von Karajan e Daniel Barenboim, insediandosi nella carica nel settembre 2002.

È stato Direttore Ospite Principale della Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra dal 1981 al 1994, ed ha lavorato con la Cleveland Orchestra e le Symphony Orchestras di Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto e Boston. Ha debuttato a New York nel 1985 con la Los Angeles Philharmonic ed è tornato nella stessa città nel 1988 per lavorare con la City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Tra le

opere da lui dirette figurano *Parsifal* e *Sophie's Choice* di Nicholas Maw per la Royal Opera, *Wozzeck* con la Los Angeles Opera, *Parsifal* e *Tristan and Isolde* con la Netherlands Opera, *Katya Kabanova* con la English National Opera, e *Idomeneo* e le opere Da Ponte di Mozart a Glyndebourne.

Simon Rattle ha firmato oltre sessanta incisioni, collezionando prestigiosi premi a livello internazionale. La sua serie *Leaving Home*, realizzata per la rete televisiva inglese Channel 4, è stata insignita del premio BAFTA nel 1997 come "Miglior programma o serie dedicata al mondo dell'Arte" e alcuni tra i suoi recenti spettacoli realizzati a Berlino sono stati trasmessi televisivamente. Simon Rattle ha ricevuto numerosi premi anche in riconoscimento dello straordinario contributo offerto alla musica e del suo impegno nelle attività educative e di comunità. Nel 1987, in occasione dei New Year Honours, la lista delle onorificenze conferite annualmente dalla regina Elisabetta, è stato nominato Comandante dell'Ordine dell'Impero britannico per i servizi resi alla Musica e nel 1994 è stato nominato Cavaliere nella Queen's Birthday Honours List, annunciata in occasione del compleanno della sovrana.

Lillian Watson as Vixen Sharp-Ears and Gwynne Howell as the Priest





Robert Tear as the Schoolmaster with Sir Simon Rattle



Gwynne Howell as Badger

COMPACT DISC ONE

Act I

'How Sharp-Ears was caught'

[1] Prelude

*Summer: the forest in the afternoon. The Badger snoozes in the sun, pestered by flies, and the Blue Dragonfly dances.***Forester** (*shotgun on shoulder*)

[2] Going to be a storm soon, I'll sit here and rest a minute. I can tell the missis I've been out all night chasing poachers!

(The Cricket and Grasshopper, who has a spinning wheel, enter.)

She trusts me, she always believes me.

(The Forester sits under a bush.)

That morning after we made love for the first time, I was worn out just like I am now! Come here, my old shotgun, you're still my best mistress, come and let me hold you, be a hunter's sweetheart! You don't fuss, you don't nag, you belong here!

*(While he sleeps the Cricket and Caterpillar make music and dance.)***Cricket**

[3] Come on, old lady, and let's get the show started.

Caterpillar

All right, if we play music you can dance do! Good old-fashioned tunes, I like that so much better.

Mosquito (*half drunk*)

Come on, come on, play it faster!

*(The Frog tries to catch the Mosquito.)***Frog**

Breketel! Breketel!

Mosquito

Stop it, mind your own business.

Damn it, stop it now! Go home! Go to hell!

Vixen Cub (*runs in, stops, stares at the Frog, who freezes*)

[4] Mummy! Mummy! What is that?

What is that? Is it good? Good to eat?

*(The Frog jumps and by mistake lands on the Forester's nose.)***Forester** (*waking up*)

Well I'll be damned! You little perisher!

(sees Vixen Cub and grabs her)

Try to bite? Little bitch!

Vixen Cub

Mummy! Mummy!

Forester (*lifting the Vixen like a dog*)

Ha, ha, ha, ha! You can struggle all you want to!

Vixen Cub

Mummy! Mummy!

Forester (*puts the Vixen under his arm*)

Children'll like you, keep them quiet!

Vixen Cub

Mummy! Mummy!

Forester (*offstage*)

Ha, ha, ha, ha!

[5] **Pantomime***(The Blue Dragonfly appears, looking for the Vixen.)**'Sharp-Ears at the Forester's lakeside farmyard'*[6] **Interlude***Autumn: afternoon sun***Forester**

[7] Look at how big she's grown!

Forester's Wife (*pouring milk in a bowl*)

I'll bet her fleas are bigger, even bigger!

Vixen (*lapping milk*)

Ou, ou! Ou, ou! Ou, ou!

Dog

Do stop all that moaning! Do you think your life's worse than mine is? Do you know how my heart weeps, seeing them kissing, making love, mating? Ow, ow, ow! I'm just filled with suffering.

(The Vixen eyes him with sympathy, then indifference.)

Every evening I sing sad songs. I'm a composer. Then the Forester always beats me. Oh! I sing and yet I don't know what love is.

Vixen

[8] I'm just the same too – no one's taught me how to make love. But I know a lot about it from listening to all the sparrows that lived in the trees over our house. They made an awful racket, yelling, screaming, calling each other nasty and indecent and immoral names. The old one had his girlfriends always hanging around in the top of the beech tree. Everyone knew it. And then, one Saturday night he got so drunk that the hawk and the raven came and then they beat him up! Anyway, not one of the children was any better. One of them ran off with a cuckoo bird, then he started sleeping around with all his neighbours. One of the sparrows had to give her hazelnuts as alimony payments. The sparrow's stepdaughter, oh! she was an ugly creature, was the forest nymphomaniac.

(The Dog tries to catch the Vixen's tail but she knocks him down.)

Dirty old dog!

*(The Dog retreats behind the rubbish-heap and the Vixen crouches in anger. The two boys, Pepik and Frantik run in.)***Pepik** (*grabbing the Vixen*)

[9] Look what we've got down 'ere. It's the Vixen.

Frantik (*tickling the Vixen's snout with a stick*)

Watch this!

Vixen

| Better stop that! Better stop that! I'm no dog like

that one! You dirty little devil! Stop it!
No more!

Frantik

Look at her growling! Now let's try it both together! Poke her hard!

(He pokes her with the stick.)

Vixen

That's enough! I'll fix you now!

(The Vixen jumps at Pepik.)

Pepik

Oh! Oh! Mummy! She hit me! She hit me!
She's going to eat me up!

Vixen *(running away towards the woods)*
Freedom!

(She trips.)

Frantik

Catch her, now! Get her now!

Pepik

Ou, ou! Ou! Ou! Ou!

Forester's Wife *(running out of the house)*
I've had it! I'm going to kill that stinking old fox of yours! She's full of fleas, and she's always in the way!

Forester

So let's tie her up then!

(He ties the Vixen up.)

Vixen

Ou, ou!

(The Forester and his Wife go into the house. Frantik disappears and the Dog creeps away.)

[10] Interlude

It begins to get dark. The Vixen appears as a young girl. She cries in her sleep.

Vixen

Ou, ou!

[11] Dawn breaks. The Vixen is herself again.

'Sharp-Ears as politician'; 'Sharp-Ears runs away.'

Dog *(stretching; to the Vixen)*

[12] You should take a lesson from me!

You must be more careful! You better hold your temper!

Rooster *(strutting)*

Everybody come along and pay attention. Look at little madam Vixen. All tied up now. Look at her! And that's because she does not sit on nests, laying eggs like you all do! Do your best! Lay your eggs! I'll be here, helping you.

Hens

We're working hard, laying eggs. We're working hard, laying eggs.

Chief Hen *(taunting the Vixen)*

Trrp! Trrp! Trrp! Trrp! Trrp!

Rooster

That's pretty good, now try again!

Chief Hen

Trrp!

Vixen *(springing up)*

[13] Sisters! Comrades! What good is he as a leader? He just uses your bodies, and the humans pay him for his pleasure. Sisterhood, organise! Down, with the present system! Build a better world! One where we can all be equal, sharing everything together.

Hens *(laughing)*

No more rooster? No more rooster?

Vixen

Why should we need men at all? He takes the best grain, eats it himself, and you have to eat the scraps that he knows you will settle for.

Rooster *(furiously)*

She's no feminist! She is just trying to trick us all, so she can eat up all of us!

Hens *(running like mad)*

That's it! That's it! That's it! That's it! That's it!

Vixen

I can't stand such ignorance. All this conservatism! I'll just have to kill myself. Goodbye.

(She pretends to bury herself alive.)

Chief Hen

[14] Come on then, don't be frightened, (frightened) see if she is dead!

(The Vixen kills the Rooster, then starts slaughtering all the Hens.)

Chief Hen

Kokokodak! Kokokodak!

Forester's Wife *(running in)*

Oh? Oh? Oh? Oh damn it all! Oh damn it all!

Vixen

Ha, ha ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha ha!

Chief Hen

Kokokodak, kokokodak, kokokodak!
Nevermore tenderness! No more baby chicks.

Forester's Wife

You dirty devil! Look what happens, just because I let him give orders, stupid idiot.

Chief Hen

How can I hatch my eggs now?

Forester's Wife

I could have had a muff! You just wait!
Oh damn it all! I'm going to fix you this time!

Vixen

Now's my chance!

Forester's Wife

Oh damn it all! Come on! Shoot that fox!

(The Vixen tries to break her rope. The Forester comes in and starts hitting the Vixen with a club.)

Vixen

You wouldn't scare me if you were ten times bigger!

Forester

Damn it, I'm going to break your back!

(The Vixen bites through the rope.)

Vixen

But you won't catch me!

(She knocks the Forester down and disappears into the woods.)

Act II

'Sharp-Ears expropriates a home'

[15] Prelude

The forest in the late afternoon

Vixen *(looking inside Badger's den)*

[16] Ah!

Badger

Who's that out there screaming?

Vixen

Me, sir, it's only me!

Badger

You nasty flea-bitten vagabond! I won't have intruders around here.

Vixen

He, he, he, he! He, he, he, he! Lazy badger, just who do you think you are?

Flies

Lazy old badger.

Vixen

Look at that badger, lying there like a capitalist!

Flies

You capitalist!

Vixen

He's got a house big enough for three, and he insults the working class when we try to look at it!

Flies

Look at him! Look at him!

Vixen

He sits there like a banker.

Flies

Look at him! Look at him!

Badger

You little birch, this is intolerable!

(hits her)

If you don't get away this minute, I will call my lawyer and he'll sue you!

Vixen *(lifting her tail; the Badger hits her again)*

Sue this! You filthy bastard, vicious old hypocrite!

Flies

You filthy bastard, vicious old hypocrite!

Vixen

You can't hit me.

Flies

You can't hit her.

Vixen

Do you think that you can treat me this way?

Flies

Do you think that you can treat her this way?

Vixen

Why d'you hit me? This is a free world!

Flies

This is a free world!

Vixen

To think that this fine gentleman won't let us even look at his property.

Flies

That nobody can look at his property.

Vixen

I ought to have you arrested! But I won't waste my time on your sort!

Flies

We'll arrest you!

Vixen

Here is something hot for you.

(She lifts up her tail, pees on him and runs.)

You can keep it as a souvenir.

Badger

Oh, this is plain indecency! How can a gentleman stay here?

(The Badger wipes a tear, tucks his pipe, goes into the woods. The Vixen slips into the empty den.)

[17] Interlude

Pásek's inn. The Schoolmaster and Forester are playing cards.

Priest *(enters, smoking a pipe like the Badger)*

[18] In my new parish things have got to be better!

Forester

I hope that's true! And now Father, are you ready for the wedding day? It looks like some woman's tied a rope on our Schoolmaster here.

Priest

'Non des mulieri corpus tuum.'

Forester

You silly old bugger, tell us, who's the lady? We'll find out soon enough I'll bet!

[19] 'Once long since, long ago, they went a-maying, He and his ladylove Spring's call obeying. Now it is harvest time, leaves they are falling, She sits at home and dreams, her youth recalling, Her lover's getting old, Winter is coming'.

What would you do with a woman at your age?

Schoolmaster

Mister Forester!

Forester

'Her hair is white as snow!

He's growing old and slow...'

Springtime's over.

Schoolmaster

I hear Mister Forester has his own problems.
I hear you came home one day with a baby
vixen. Are you a happy couple?

Forester

Don't you mention vixens. That bitch was a
catastrophe! That was good riddance to her! She
can go to hell! I'll get her some day! When they
come into heat, they've had it! Look at our
friend the Schoolmaster. He's such a clever
fellow. But look what he does – deals the ace to
me. Oh, Schoolmaster, I think you're done for.

Priest

'Non des mulieri corpus tuum.'

Forester

Stop that damned Latin!

Priest

I'll translate: 'Give your body no to women.'

Forester

If only you would talk Pig Latin, I might
understand.

Priest

'Give your body to no women.'

Forester

You're not serious!
(lifting the Schoolmaster's coat)
Besides are you calling that thing a body?
Undernourished old stick!

Schoolmaster

All that talk is going nowhere. That was
cockcrow, it's time to go!

Forester

Well I'll be damned! Let the rooster rest in peace!
For a rooster Peter sold Jesus Christ.

Schoolmaster *(leaving)*

Goodnight!

Pásek *(to the Priest)*

Goodnight, sir. May you bring peace and joy to
your new congregation.

Priest *(leaving)*

I'll try to do that!

Forester

[20] Home now? When there's practically no night
left? Oh, Schoolmaster, you Judas! I'm afraid that
you're about to sell your bones to a woman, just
like all the rest! But you say, No?

(to Pásek)

'In the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat bread.'
Not a word about drunkenness. No, Sir! He
never said there was anything wrong in drinking
ale. But women think they know more than God
himself! Bravo! That's right! Therefore Mister
Pásek, one more beer, please.

Pásek

You caught a vixen?

Forester

That's right!

Pásek

Come on now, and tell me all about it.

Forester

Damn her then, that's all there is to it! She ran
off! That's the end of that! I'm not going to bring
her back! I'm fed up with all this talking!

(He leaves.)

[21] **Interlude**

*Full moon. A steep path in the forest; next to it a
fence with sunflowers*

Schoolmaster

[22] Something is wrong with my equilibrium, or can
it be the planet is turning from west to east?
Makes me feel dizzy, something's wrong. Why
did I have to spend the whole night drinking
beer with those people? Why did I have to stay
there while good people sleep? Why should I be
risking my neck in total darkness? I'll be lucky if
I don't break a leg or an ankle! Every time it
rains here, this path disappears. It's a good thing
I've got my walking-stick with me, I would never
make it home! Two legs and one stick give a
person three supporting points. Now that I've
got these three legs, I'm balanced quite perfectly
– just like this! I'll try it without my stick.
Damn it all!

*(He falls. The Vixen darts behind a sunflower.
The Schoolmaster tries to focus on the flower.)*

[23] Staccato! Flageoletti! Oh, oh, Terynka! If I had
only known I would see you, I'd have left my

drunken friends! I'd have been here sooner. Do
you really love me? Oh, Terynka!

(The flower moves.)

Can't you really see, I've loved you all my life,
now destiny calls to us! I beg you, oh answer me
now! Won't you forgive my desperate longing for
your kisses! I shall take you away and hold you
forever in my arms.

(The flower moves away.)

Aha, she wants me to join her! Now I can live in
happiness...

*(He tries to leap the fence, but it collapses and he
falls headlong. He lies stunned. The Vixen moves
away and hides.)*

Priest *(approaching. The Schoolmaster hides
behind the fence.)*

[24] 'So remember to be a good man!'

Bless me, which of these classics is that from?

(tries to light his pipe)

Pipe won't light! Back when I was just a student,
I sat here just like this – that girl, her yellow hair
was like a ray of light, she gazed at me with such
innocence. Clear and childlike. Now I
remember. But then it finished badly. Oh, her
lovely eyes, deep and dark as the firmament,
dark and so beautiful, deep as a forest pool,
hiding treachery and accursed sin! And with a
common butcher! And they put the blame on
me! I was so ignorant! She made me think she
was innocent as a baby. Since that happened, no
woman has ever seemed to me anything but a

where! I'm alone now, just like a broom left in a corner.

[26] 'Memnestho aner agathos einai.'
That's from Mister Xenophon's *Anabasis*!

Forester (*offstage*)
There she is!
(*The Vixen runs across the stage.*)
Now I've got her!

Schoolmaster and Priest (*getting up*)
God help me! I can't let him see me! That fellow doesn't understand the frailty of man!
(*They run off in opposite directions.*)

Forester (*offstage*)
Sharp-Ears!
(*Gun shots are heard. The Forester comes in with his gun.*)
I'll bet my life on it! I'll bet you that was our Vixen!

'Sharp-Ears's courtship'; 'Sharp-Ears's love and marriage'

[26] **Interlude**
Wordless chorus offstage. The forest in the moonlight. The Vixen lying in front of her den. The Fox appears.

Vixen
[27] O my god! He's so handsome! He's so handsome!

Fox
Mademoiselle, did I disturb you?

Vixen
Oh no! Oh no!

Fox
Are there many birds in this forest?

Vixen
Yes!

Fox
Do you think that I can catch one?

Vixen
Yes, I often come here to look for them. I live just round the corner. I just came out for a little ramble – and I was hoping that would cure my headache.

Fox
Then if you don't mind me, may I come walking with you? You may find hunters out waiting to shoot at you, and if you're lost in thought, meditating, you easily might come to harm.

Vixen
Please, if you would not mind too much...

Fox
That is, if you think your mother will permit it.

Vixen
Oh, no! I'm alone and independent.

Fox (*to himself*)
Independent?

Vixen
I have my own place. My uncle Badger left it to me.

Fox
Owner of your own house?

Vixen
I lived with the Forester just like his children.

Fox
His children?

Vixen
That's where I grew up, and had my education.
[28] One dark night, listen; I still tremble to think of it! I got caught! But you know vixens always fight back! And we always win the fight. Humans never will outwit a fox! They tried to beat me up! My tail got caught in a trap! That old man swore at me: 'I'm going to break your back! I'm going to break your back! After that I'm going to tear your greedy throat out... and Missis Forester gets a fur muff that's fit for royalty!' You should be ashamed to hurt me that way! If you think that you've caught me, you are mistaken! You are the greedy one! What do you need all that food for? There is food for all, and I'm starving to death! I'm not used to begging so I just took a little. Now, hit me! Now, try it and then we'll see. He went for me! Tyranny! Then I got him! He toppled down like a tree struck by lightning. I ran off. Now I'm just an orphan. Oh, the forest was dark as the night! In it I found freedom!

Fox (*introducing himself*)
[29] Fox Goldenstripe, yellow furred fox from the deep ravine, is at your service.

Vixen
Pleased, I'm sure! Fox Sharp-Ears, ex-foster-child of the gamekeeper.

Fox (*kissing her paw, formally*)
Would you mind if I came back again, to pay a visit, mad'moiselle?

Vixen
I would like that very much.

Fox
Do you often come here in the evening?

Vixen
At about midnight or later. Always quite alone. I have no boy-friends. I have a rule that no one ever goes walking with me!

Fox
The ideal modern-day woman! Do you smoke?

Vixen
No, I don't yet.

Fox
Do you like rabbits?

Vixen
I adore them!

Fox (*departing*)
Well in that case...

(*He goes off.*)

Vixen (*alone*)

[30] Can it be that I am lovely? Can it be I am beautiful? Can it be I am beautiful?
(*The Fox comes back carrying a rabbit. He observes her.*)

Can it be I am beautiful? Maybe I'm really pretty!
What are these emotions I am feeling now!

Fox (*to himself*)

She is so lovely, so lovely! Quick or someone else will get her!

Vixen

Am I really then so lovely? Oh, my handsome lover!

Fox (*enters hesitantly*)

I kiss your hand.

Vixen (*to herself*)

If you only knew just how much I have lost my heart to you.

Fox

Morning, Sharp-Ears!

Vixen (*leaps up*)

Why have you come back here so early?

Fox (*shows her a rabbit*)

He, he, he! He, he he! I have brought you a little present. He, he he! He, he, he!

Vixen

He, he, he, he! You are terrible! You have gone to so much trouble just to surprise me.

Fox

You are shivering?

Vixen

No-o, I am burning!

Fox

Have you ever loved someone before?

Vixen

No-o! And have you?

Fox

Also no-o!

Vixen

Why?

Fox

Because, because I have not found a partner yet, one I could respect and honour, one for whom I'd give my life. But if ever I find someone...

Vixen

Then?...

Fox

Without a moment's hesitation I would ask her, do you love me?
Please answer me!

(*He embraces her passionately.*)

Vixen

[31] Let me go! I am afraid of you! I'm frightened!
Please don't hurt me! Go away! I am so frightened!

Fox

Go then, leave me! Take all my future with you!
Break my heart! Break my heart! My life is over!

Vixen

Really? You should have told me that sooner!

Fox

My Sharp-Ears, it is you, only you, that I want forever!

Vixen

Me? Me?

Fox

I love you only, only you, Sharp-Ears, I love only you. You will be my joy forever. All my life I have been dreaming of only a woman just like you!

Vixen

Why just like me? Why just like me?

Fox

It is true. I do not tell foxy lies. I speak what my heart tells me! I love you, not just your body but your soul even more! Do not say no! You will see, you will see, Sharp-Ears. Novels will be inspired by you, operas will be sung about Sharp-Ears. Come here, do not leave me, sit here and let me hold you.

(*kisses her*)

Don't cry! Don't cry! I too am weeping with happiness. Do you want me?

Vixen

Yes! Yes!

(*They slip into the den.*)

(*The Blue Dragonfly dances. The Owl and Jay fly in.*)

Owl

[32] If you had only seen what I saw just now. With my own eyes I have seen them both doing it! Shocking and scandalous! Sharp-Ears behaving like you know what! I can't say!

Jay

Who with?

(*The sun comes up.*)

Vixen (*sobbing, comes out of the den*)

A-o-o-u! A-o-o-u! A-o-o-u!

Fox (*following her out*)

Stop crying, stop crying! What did I do to make you cry? Tell me why you're crying.

Vixen

Don't you know what's going to happen now?

Fox

I don't know what you mean.
(*She whispers to him.*)

[33] That's how it is!

Vixen

And what will you do with me now?

Fox

We'd better look for a priest!

Woodpecker (*peeking out of tree*)
Well, about time too! What do you think you
want from me?

(*Voices of the forest are heard offstage.*)

Fox
We would like, right away, a quick wedding!

Woodpecker
You mean the banns? No?... I pronounce Fox
Goldenstripe and the Vixen Sharp-Ears joined in
marriage.

(*Wedding celebration and dance.*)

COMPACT DISC TWO

Act III

'Sharp-Ears outwits Harašta from Lišen': 'Sharp-Ears's death'

[1] **Prelude**
Autumn: the edge of the forest at noon

Harašta (*with an empty basket*)

[2] In the month of May,
Flowers were blooming;
She sat at her window,
She sat at her window
And she tra-la-la-lăd,
And she tra-la-lăd.

Will you let me in,
Will you, my lady?

But she smiled so sweetly,
But she smiled so sweetly;
No, sir, no-no-no-no-no-no.
No, sir, no-no-no.

And the band played on,
Music was playing,
Will you come along now?
Will you come along now?
Maybe, may-may-may-may-maybe,
Well sir, maybe!

(*He sees a dead rabbit, killed by a fox, which he is
about to pick up when he sees the Forester.*)

Forester
[3] Hey there, Harašta, how's it going?

Harašta
All right – it wouldn't be so bad if I didn't have
so many problems!

Forester
Harašta, how do you cope without a wife?

Harašta
I'm doing fine, sir, very fine indeed, sir. You
know I've already got myself a woman. I'm
getting married! I'm getting married! I bet that
you can't imagine me with a wife!
(*shows him a bottle*)
Drink up, then I will tell you what her name is.
It is Terynka!

Forester
Terynka?

Harašta
It is Terynka!

Forester
Terynka!

Harašta
Terynka, Terynka!

Forester
I hope you're not poaching, Harašta.

Harašta
God is my witness! The devil may punish me,
I swear, not a feather! You know, but I could
have done it!

Forester
What's all this then?

Harašta
Now, look over there at that dead rabbit! Some
creature killed it. Nearly took it. Something said,
'better not'. Conscience told me not to! Don't
touch Harašta, if you get caught it's too bad!

Forester
Harašta! Well I'll be damned! Harašta keep your
hands off! If you get caught, serves you right!
Somebody killed it.

Harašta
Dead as a dumpling!

Forester
Sharp-Ears still causing trouble!
(*sets a trap*)

That's for the Vixen! I'll catch her. No doubt
she'll be back to get it.

(*He leaves.*)

Harašta
He, he, he! He, he, he! He, he, he!

(*He leaves in the opposite direction. Foxcubs run in
and dance.*)

Fox Cubs
[4] 'Little foxes running fast,
Saw a rabbit going past;
Rabbit said "You can't catch me",
Foxes said "just wait and see".
Rabbit took off like a flash,
Foxes followed with a dash,
Rabbit tripped on buttercup,
Foxes ate old rabbit up.'

(*They see the rabbit.*)

Vixen
Look at that! Look at that!

Fox and Fox Cubs
Look at that!

Vixen
Why is the rabbit lying here for all to see?

Fox and Fox Cubs
Look at that!

Vixen
Something's wrong here. I smell trouble.
Something funny's going on.

Fox

Watch out! Danger!

Fox Cub

Mummy, I know what it is! It's a fox trap!

Vixen

That man must think we're going crazy.

Fox Cubs

It's a fox trap! It's a fox trap.

That man must think we're going crazy!

Vixen

Does he think that we are fools?

Fox Cubs

Does he think that we are fools?

Vixen

That's not like foxes!

Fox and Fox Cubs

That's not like foxes!

Vixen

Silly fellow, oh, what a fool!

Fox and Fox Cubs

Oh, what a fool!

Vixen

You can smell his tobacco! He thinks we've lost every last fox hair on our foxy backs!

(Little foxes run off.)

Fox

[5] How many children do we have? Old girl, tell me!

Vixen

Who knows, who knows?

Fox

When will you help me to make some more children? Old girl, tell me!

Vixen

You must not talk like that! There may well be someone listening. How animals gossip! It will be all over the woods before you know it!

Fox

Will we have more? You are as lovely as ever, you are as lovely as ever!

Vixen

Just wait, just wait, we will talk about that when next May comes.

Fox

I'll wait, I'll wait, I'll wait, I'll wait... I'll wait 'til May comes. I'll wait... as soon as May comes!

Harašta *(offstage)*

'Maytime comes, and Maytime goes,
Soon comes Winter and its woes,
Marry me, my maiden fair!
You'll be warm and free from care.'

Vixen

Who is that yowling?

Fox

Who is that yowling?

Vixen

Go! Hide yourself!

(Harašta enters with a basket of chickens.)

I'm going to look and see just what kind of man this is!

Harašta

'After Winter comes the May,
Filled with joy and filled with play.
We'll have children, one, two, three...'
(sees Vixen and sets down his basket)

[6] Put it down fast! Harašta, Harašta!

Hurry, get your gun!
(grabs the gun from his basket)
There you are! You'll be a muff for Terynka.

Vixen

I'll show you!
*(She limps around, while Harašta tries to aim.
He runs after her.)*

Try to kill, because I'm just a vixen! Try to kill,
because I'm just a vixen! Try to kill!
(Harašta stumbles.)
Better watch your nose...

Harašta

Damn and blast it!

Vixen

...and I'll watch your basket!

(Runs to Harašta's basket.)

Harašta

Oh, oh, oh! Damn and blast it! What will

Terynka say now when she sees me!... Satan himself sent that vixen to me!

Vixen

Try to kill! Because I'm just a vixen!... Look at how he carries on, just because I took a chicken!

Harašta *(firing his gun without aiming)*

Just you wait!

(The Vixen remains alone, dying.)

[7] **Interlude**

Garden of the Inn

Forester *(to the Innkeeper's Wife, bringing beer)*

[8] Where is old man Pásek?

Innkeeper's Wife

In Brno. We're very busy, white-washing. I've no time for talking.

Forester *(to the Schoolmaster, at table)*

I went, followed the footprints, and then I found her den abandoned. Well, Schoolmaster, what about that dried-up fox tongue, it's all yours now. It makes you invisible, they say. Me, I get a muff for the wife! You might find the fox tongue practical next time you go a-courting out there in the sunflowers!

Schoolmaster

Too late now. Miss Terynka's getting married this morning.

Innkeeper's Wife

She's got a muff! Fox-fur muff!

Schoolmaster (*to himself, sadly*)

And so it ends.

Forester

- [9] Well I'm damned! Dried up like a stick, but even so, a woman can make him cry! Well, don't you worry, you'll forget her! Marriage at your age, with such a woman, that would be dangerous counterpoint!

(*to the Innkeeper's wife*)

Wonder how the Priest is. How is he in his new parish?

Innkeeper's Wife

He's unhappy, lonely...

Forester

Getting late, I'm off now.

Schoolmaster

But where, so early!

Forester

Where? Through the woods then home. My old dog is tired and helpless. He has trouble walking, he's an old dog, just like us, Schoolmaster, just like us. How long it seems now since we both were young and foolish! And now the fellow's glad just to find a quiet corner and put his feet up, go to sleep.

'The young Sharp-Ears is the spitting image of her mother.'

- [10] **Interlude**

The forest in the afternoon

Forester

- [11] Spring is here at last. Good to see the trees green again! Makes a man wonder at it, and I'm no younger.* Is it true or just a story? Or just a story? How many years have passed, since two young lovers walked here in springtime, she like a silver fir, he a dark-leaved pine? When they went mushroom gathering, they would leave the best or trample on them, all because they could not see, they were so deeply in love. But the kisses then, oh, the kisses that those lovers gathered! We were young and newly married! God yes, we were young and newly married!

(*sits down*)

Without the flies... a man could fall asleep in seconds...

- [12] When evening arrives, I welcome the rays of the setting sun! How splendid stands the forest! Spring comes once again and woodland spirits now return in May-time. Dancing and leaping and laughing and eagerly waiting for love! Holding each other, always answering Spring's hymn of love! And flowers will drink the tears of May-time, rejoicing with roses, violets and yellow daffodils! People will pass in holy silence bowing their heads, and all the joy of Heaven will unfold, covering them in glory!
(*He falls asleep. All the animals from Act I appear. The Forester, dreaming, sits up.*)

- [13] Hey! But I can't see the Vixen there!
(*A Vixen cub enters.*)

I see her! There she is! Baby Sharp-Ears! Little devil! Like a twinkle in her mother's eye! Hey there! Wait till I catch you, just like your mother! But I'll treat you better, that's for sure. Maybe then they won't try to make our lives into an opera.

(*He opens his arms to catch the Vixen but catches a Frog instead.*)

Hey there! Now I remember you! Cold little bugger!

Frog (*stammering in fear*)

- [14] Tha-that wasn't me. Tha-that was my Granddaddy! He used to tell me ab-about you! He used to tell me ab-about you!

English translation:

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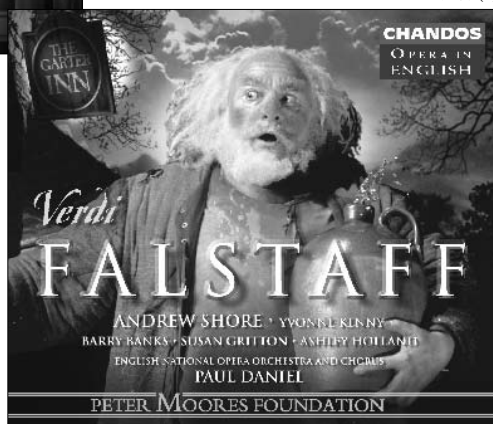
*Original version: Look at that mushroom! Standing like a toy soldier, showing off like a schoolgirl with a brand new hat!

(*Picks mushroom and strokes it.*)

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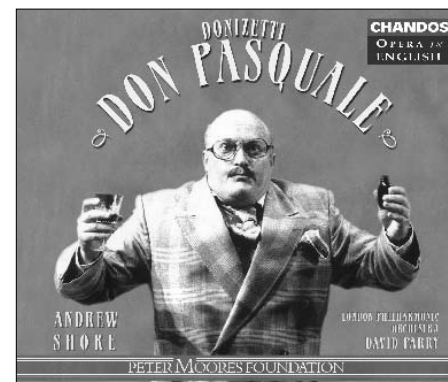


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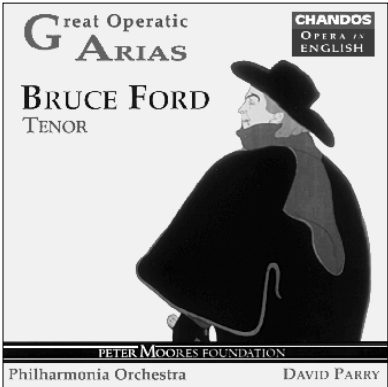


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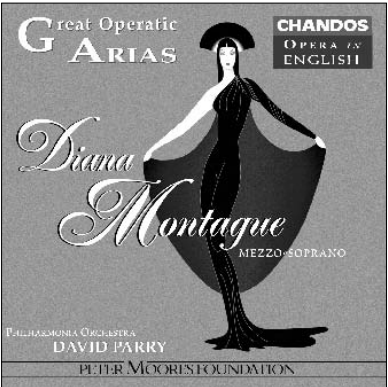


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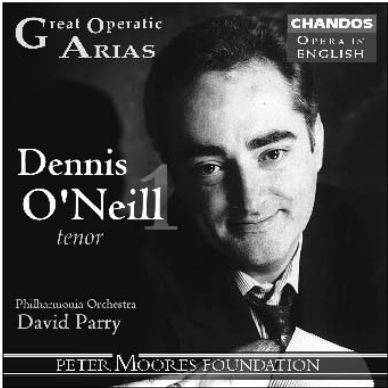
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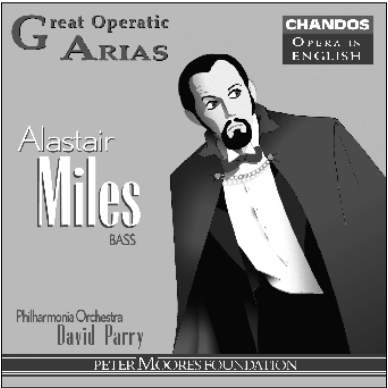
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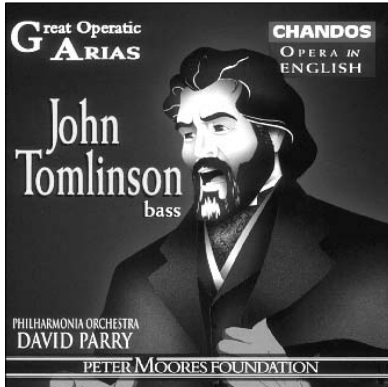


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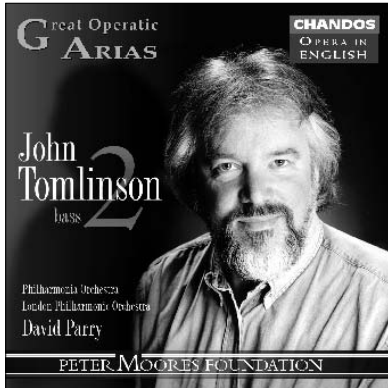
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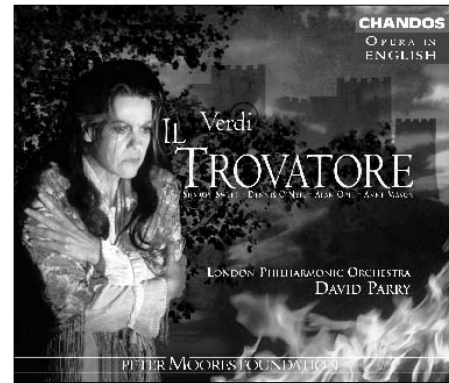


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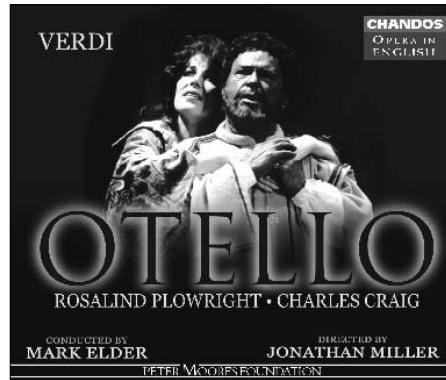
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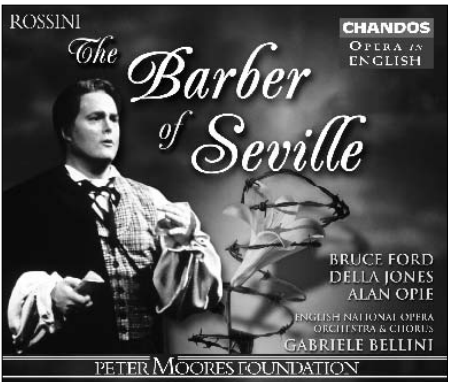


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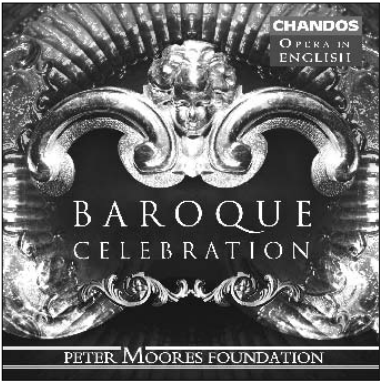
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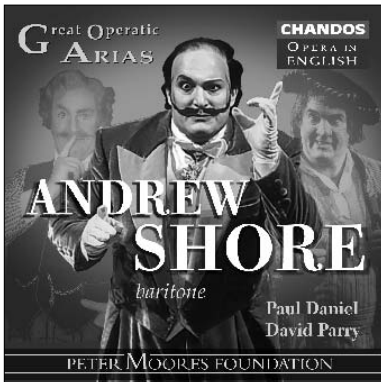
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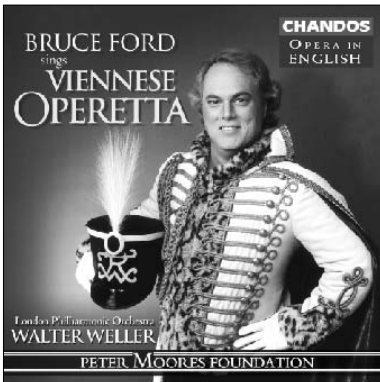
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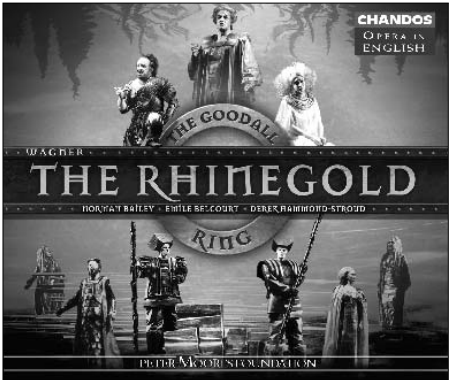
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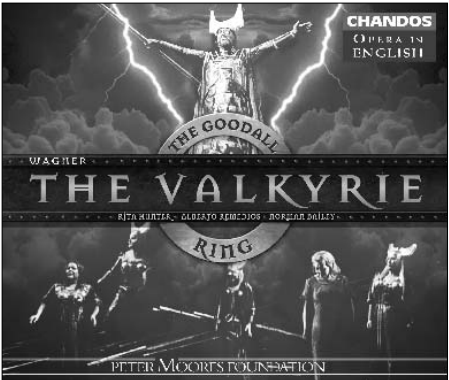
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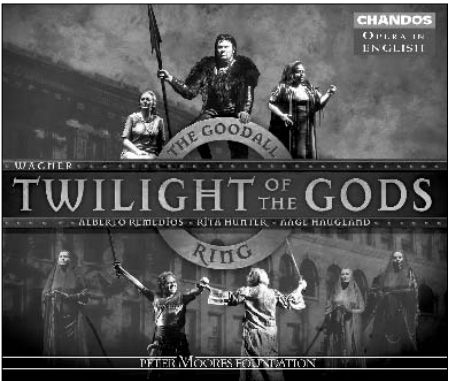
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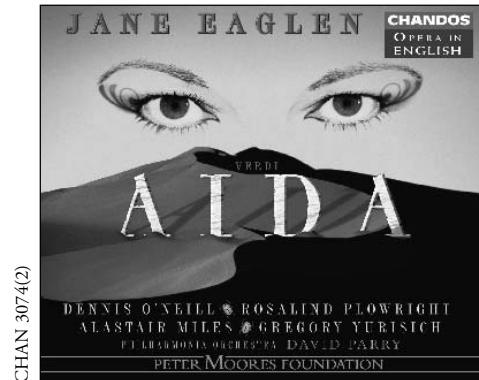
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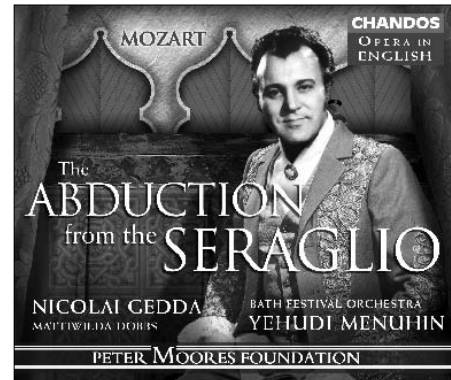
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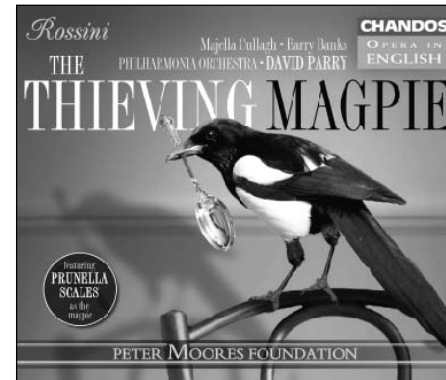
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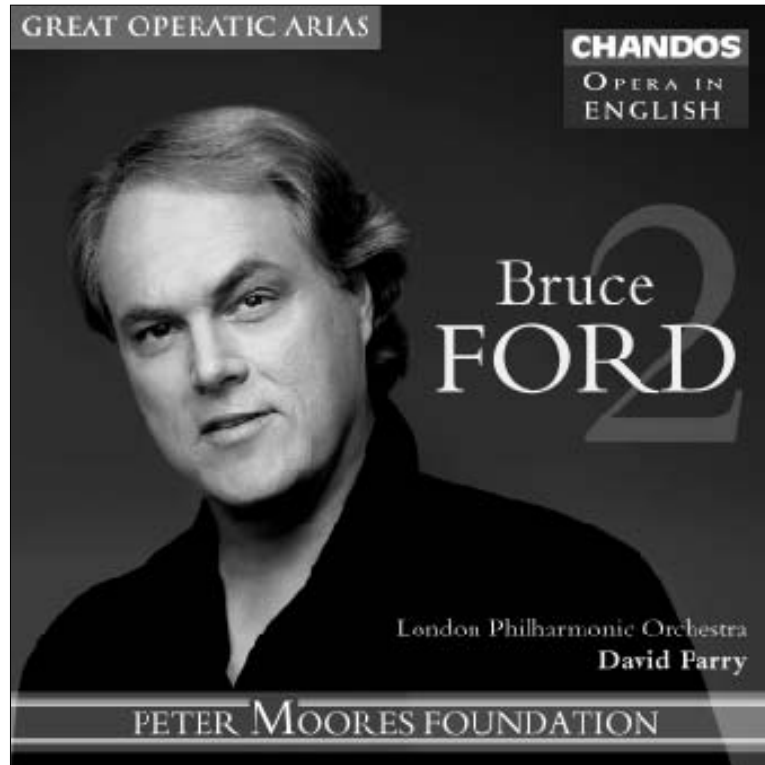


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JANÁČEK: THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

CHANDOS

CHANDOS DIGITAL 2-disc set **CHAN 3101(2)**

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)

The Cunning Little Vixen
The Adventures of Fox Sharp-Ears

Opera in three acts

Libretto by Leoš Janáček, English translation by Yveta Synek Graff and Robert T. Jones

Forester Thomas Allen *bass*
Mosquito / Schoolmaster Robert Tear *tenor*
Forester's Wife / Owl Gillian Knight *soprano*
Vixen Sharp-Ears Lillian Watson *soprano*
Priest / Badger Gwynne Howell *bass*
Pásek, Innkeeper John Dobson *tenor*
Harašta, a poacher Nicholas Folwell *baritone*
Fox Diana Montague *mezzo-soprano*
Innkeeper's Wife Elizabeth Bainbridge *mezzo-soprano*

Hens, Forest creatures and Voices:

Royal Opera House Chorus, Covent Garden
Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
Simon Rattle

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COMPACT DISC TWO
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